



IF A HOUSE
COULD TALK



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The Vaill Homestead which belongs to my memory

IF A HOUSE COULD TALK

BEING A HISTORY

OF A FLOOD OF RELEASED RECOLLECTIONS, THE RESURRECTION OF OLD LETTERS AND
PHOTOGRAPHS PERTAINING TO LITCHFIELD AND THE VAILL HOMESTEAD COVER-
ING A PAST DATING FROM 1867 TO 1876 IN WHICH I WAS VITALLY INTER-
ESTED, AN UNBRIDGED PAST DATING FROM 1876 TO 1915, AN IN-
TERIM OF TWO YEARS, WHEN BY SOME STRANGE DECREE OF
FATE IT WAS ORDAINED THAT I SHOULD SPEND THE SUMMER
MONTHS CLOSE BY THE SPOT ON WHICH JULIA LAST
TREAD THE EARTH, AND WHERE HER SOUL TOOK
FLIGHT, A FITTING ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH
TO GATHER THESE STRAY LEAVES WITH-
IN THE CONFINES OF THESE COV-
ERS TO THE MEMORY OF
JULIA AND FOR "AULD
LANG SYNE"

By

CORA SMITH GOULD

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21

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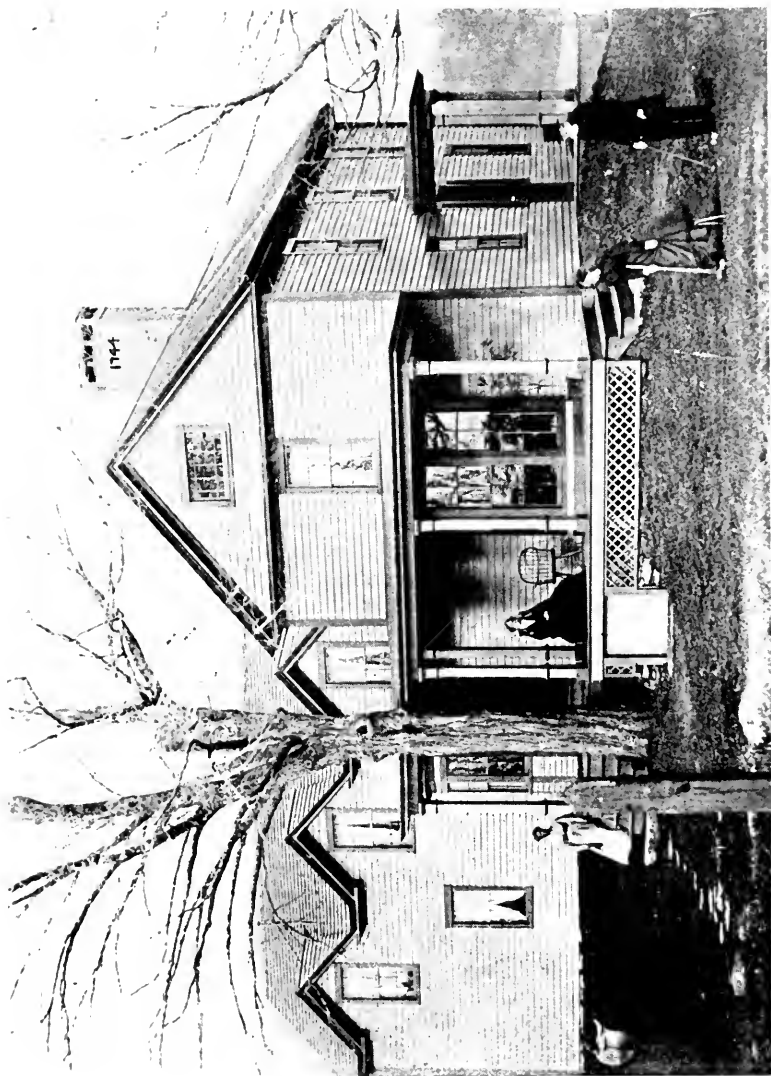
21

TO
the Little House on the Knoll
on the Fringe of the Village of Litchfield, Conn.

THE VAILL HOMESTEAD

one hundred and seventy-three years old in
this year nineteen hundred
and seventeen

*To all the loyal hearts that have beat beneath its roof
To all the descendants of the same wherever they may be
This sketch is affectionately dedicated*



"Many years ago"
Left to right, Hannah, Mrs. H. L. Vaill, Julia, Rev. H. L. Vaill

LITCHFIELD

(The first place on this continent to bear the name, incorporated as a village, May, 1818)

AFTER many years I re-visit the scenes of my childhood. Shades of the Vaill, Smith, Lyman, Robinson and Ormiston families—where have they flown? Their descendants, representing a second and third generation, scattered over the broad earth.

My mind is running riot with crowding memories, rushing memories—now tinged with sadness, now lifted up to strata of joyous thought. Sad, with the loss of our first loves, who have passed through the portals of their earthly home to the Great Beyond; glad, in the realization of many hopes fulfilled, and increase of family ties to ameliorate the pang of separations.

Could I but borrow my Father's poetical mantle, I would dress my thoughts in just such beautiful metaphors as the following from his pen:

“One little day of sunshine and of tears,
One little day of mingled hopes and fears,
One little day, and then the shining shore
Beyond is reached, and we are known no more.
Life's but a span at most, come weal, come woe—
And still our joys and sorrows ebb and flow.
Joy-bells ring, yet sorrows pierce the heart;
Glad re-unions come, yet friends must part.”

Oh, for the pen of a Goldsmith, to make "A Deserted Village" glow with pristine sweetness and renewed interest! Or for that of a Tennyson, who plays on our heart-strings in "The Days That Are No More"! Or that of a Moore who has called forth a thousand reverberating echoes with "'Tis the Last Rose of Summer"! And what mortal could resist the tender appeal of John Howard Payne's "Home, Sweet Home"? Countless thousands of other gifted ones live within the charmed circle, looking through the Poet's prism at this sad, old world, which they idealize and beautify.

Again, I wish for the Artist's power to transform bare canvas into an immortal creation with mere brush and pigment. The perspective of the picture reveals the real touch of genius, after all. Strong and impelling as may be the story told in the foreground, it lacks the mystic atmosphere and mellow tints of the background.

So now do I pose in the foreground of this picture-in-prose of Litchfield, straining my eyes to catch the farthest ray of light to illumine my pathway back to the rocks and rills, the woods, the birds, the flowers—all more lovely than ever in perspective, this Twelfth day of August, Nineteen hundred and fifteen.

LITCHFIELD, THE CRADLE OF THE VAILLS—AND JULIA

BACK after many years with husband and son, in a wonderful machine, such as was never dreamed of in the days of yore, to the hallowed spot to prove that she had not been romancing or weaving a fairy story to amuse these two who have filled her life for almost twenty-five years, whilst the past receded to its own shadowy background.

Could anything be more magical than coming such a distance over hill and dale in such a manner, flying up ascents that had seemed interminable then, when the horses climbed them laboriously from the railroad station eight miles away? No train had ever come closer to the town.

I remembered my very first visit in care of a friend bound for that mystical spot called L i t c h f i e l d.

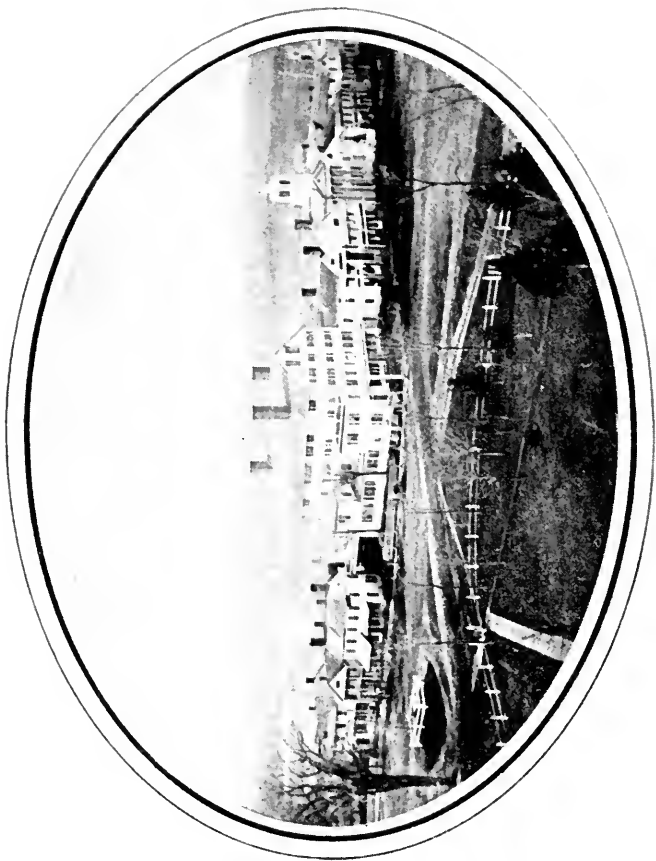
My Father had placed me aboard the train; alighting some hours later we were met by a neighboring farmer, with his horse and wagon; such a hard seat, softened, however, by a blanket placed across it. Evidently we had not timed our coming for the stage. This good Samaritan of Miss Julia's was the typical sort with the wide-brimmed straw hat and the wisp of straw in his mouth, such type as had never before come under my actual observation. His questions were innumerable with an evident craving for news from the city

folks. It was almost dusk when we arrived and it grew rapidly darker as we jogged along those everlasting miles. I was thankful that my smiles and suppressed laughter were hidden for the most part from his occasional scrutinizing glance. I was at the giggling age, uncontrollable to the verge of rudeness under great pressure. My laconic rejoinders to his questioning brought forth from him the same response in a dialect new to my ears. "Dew tell, I wanter know." It became a by-word with us children for the season, even our elders smiled though they rebuked the levity, but that was long ago. My husband is talking now. He is saying that he is surprised that Torrington does not strike a responsive chord in my mind, but it means nothing to me, except that according to the sign-post it is eight miles to Litchfield from this apparently flourishing town—from which we fairly flew away toward the enchanted Litchfield of my dreams.

My eyes were strained to catch a glimpse of the distant church steeple, my heart-beats quickened, we came nearer and nearer—we reached the goal—but "Phelp's Tavern"* and "The Berkshire Inn" meant naught to me. On close inspection both looked equally unfamiliar to my anxious eyes. However, stop we must—and did—at the door of the one called "The Berkshire Inn." "A room and bath?" "No," from the clerk. "Yes," from one higher in authority. "It will take ten minutes to prepare the room."

The proprietor could not see a motor party pass him by; so he gives up his room for the night.

*An old and distinguished friend, disguised by an added story and a change of name.



The old Litchfield village as I remembered it

Vanish every remaining illusion nursed tenaciously to this crisis—on taking possession of an uninviting corner of the house! Why *did* I come! We sup in semi-darkness in an improvised out-of-door dining-room—a feeble attempt having been made at something up to date with shaded candles, which in this instance served only to throw a deeper gloom over my spirits. The meal finished, I was eager to escape the strange atmosphere. “Come, George; let us hurry away—even in the dark and drizzle. I want to breathe the pure air, and find one familiar thing.” I am sure even in the dark I can discern the old Church, or the white frame building on the farther corner called the “Mansion House,” which catered to the comfort of the wayfarer in those good old days. Even a glimpse of the small candy-shop with the perennial chocolate cream drops, hard though toothsome, doled out to us in tiny white paper bags, upon which Ambrosia, our chaperone, looked askance—even a glimpse of this lure of the town would prove an oasis; or the prosaic butcher’s, in which I had less interest, I would now greet cordially. It was down from the sidewalk three steps, and I could see Miss Julia behind the window making careful choice of the cuts, while I sat in the wagon and held the reins as a mere matter of form. But they all seem to have vanished—these landmarks! George tries to laugh away my disappointment, verging almost on terror, at the blank wall which seems to rise before me. “What is this new spot?” I gasped helplessly, as one laboring under some cruel spell. “I never saw this park, with its many cement walks,” I wailed; “nor the monument: it is all discouragingly new.”

We sat for a few moments on a bench under the fine stone shaft, on which were inscribed the names of the Litchfield heroes of the Civil War. I told George how in the old days we children from the Vaill homestead used to travel, with old Billy or Kitty—the faithful horse and mare, to the town, a distance of several miles; how we would drive the spoiled pets through the streams, allowing them to loiter and cool themselves; how I loved to hear the wheels crunch over the pebbles in the bottom of the brook, where occasionally would dart a venturesome perch or trout for which I was ever on the lookout. My listener is sympathetic, but pretends to skepticism, as there seemed as yet no proof of my statements. But my reminiscing is cut short, for the rain drives us back to the shelter on the unromantic piazza of the Inn, which had taken shape in my long absence and gone into decline ere my return—not old enough to be interesting, and too old to be attractive to me in my present humor.

Just to make it interesting, George starts his favorite topic—which is the last straw on my depressed spirits—*data*, both as to the flight of time and the ages of certain dwellers on this sphere—more especially appertaining to this special inhabitant, *myself*. His ambition tends to encourage one's climb up to high-water mark, and from that vantage point to take a certain amount of pride in recounting the steps which typify our birthdays, as if each one were an accomplishment of our own volition, and quite a laudable achievement. Each year must fit nicely and accurately in its proper place on the tablet. My ambition, on the other hand, is to slight the rapid advance of years, and to step by

the milestones with hardly a glance of recognition, for each succeeding year I look upon as a robber—something near and dear is taken from us, and much given to us that we do not want—grey hairs a-plenty and wrinkles that do not beautify. I was wrought up to rather an irritable condition of mind on this particular evening, and caustically admonished my stronger half that it was not necessary for him to exaggerate the years that had slipped by, or proclaim my age from the house-tops. I had overheard a few remarks addressed by him to the stranger behind the desk—"Yes, my wife was here many years ago, before you were born. She is revisiting the place. Have you by any chance heard of the Vaill homestead?" etc., etc. In the darkness of our quiet corner I continued: "No, I am not proud to be old. If you are, that is your privilege." He laughed aloud at my emphasis. I suppose there was something ludicrous in the situation, for I laughed, too; but my thoughts would wander restlessly. "Do they realize that I am here—those dim, shadowy, far-away forms, whose faces look pathetically at me as I close my eyes in the darkness—Julia, Abbie, Mary, the dear old couple they called parents, and my own Father, always a luminous spot in my mind. It was always his plan to make us happy those summer days and evenings. But all seems more ethereal than ever, and these strange environments are reality; but tomorrow—tomorrow!

After a fitful night it came, bright and beautiful after the rain; and my spirits rise, as the sunlight plays reassuringly through the leaves upon our small breakfast-table. At once my son and I start on a reconnoiter-

ing tour. Just one little familiar sign is not too much to hope for, but even so it is still denied us in the broad light of day. All save the trees look strange; but *they* seem to nod a welcome, as if to say, "Come, walk again beneath our sheltering arms. We remember you, a little girl, in your white frock and gay ribbons, every Sunday on your way to church. We have stood here all these years, growing taller and stronger. But you may be sure of us. You always spoke of our beauty; and we felt sure that you loved us." But the trees could not tell me what had become of the old landmarks that I sought. Not that they were all things of beauty; but they belonged in my memory, and they were lost.

I had thought out a scheme in the night to unlock the door which led to the past, and escape from the present associated with hard beds and damp, musty-smelling rooms: aggravated by the rain, I would endeavor to purchase a history of old Litchfield. Should this fail, I would visit the Library and delve amongst ancient lore. So with the spirit of a warrior going forth to do or die, I charged upon a young woman who held the fort as custodian of a wonderful array of the inevitable post-card. My inquiry brought forth the information that such a book as I desired could be procured at the drug-store on the corner—an ostentatious, new brick building, which seemed to say, "Down with the old, and up with the new;" but outside of its possibilities to furnish me with one, and only one, vital piece of literature I had no interest though I have no doubt the owner of the building was a proud man. A very bored and preoccupied person within



Here stood the church in which Lyman Beecher preached, 1810-1826
 One-half mile north stood the home where were born Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1811
 Henry Ward Beecher, 1813
 Erected by The Litchfield County University Club, 1908

and behind the formidable counter pushed a book toward me, which he extracted from underneath somewhere, in response to my somewhat discouraged inquiry. It proved to be exactly what I had no hope of finding—a little gem, the work of an enthusiast, who had spared neither trouble nor money to make it worthy of its title—"Historic Litchfield." I feverishly grasp my prize, cross the street to the village park, and sit again as on the previous evening under the memorial statue to the brave lads of Litchfield. Nearby is a testimonial to the memory of Henry Ward Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe—a beautiful work of art in bronze, representing their two heads on a medallion circled by a wreath of laurel, framed in a huge rock of unhewn granite indicative of natural strength and endurance, relative to the work of the sculptor and the work of nature, as well as to the dominant qualities that the subjects themselves suggest. Proud, indeed, were Litchfielders to claim the Beecher family as their own townspeople. Dr. Lyman Beecher came to them in the strength and forcefulness of his young manhood in 1810, and preached for many years in their midst as Pastor of the Second Congregational Church, growing famous as the years rolled by in his fight for temperance and the abolition of slavery, sowing seeds that ripened in the hands of his children. I remember the Beecher Home on the corner of two lovely streets, with magnificent old trees under which we would often jog along behind K-i-t-t-y in the full enjoyment of their grateful shade and beauty, Julia discoursing proudly on native-born genius. We would crane our necks at each repetition as if to discover something unusual about the Beecher

Home which we became eager to point out to visitors. I fear that sermons and lectures on vital matters did not appeal so strongly to us then though we realized, of course, that the Beecher men were wonderful beings and we bowed down to them, figuratively speaking, because *she* said so! The Reverend Beecher, the elder, had journeyed to that bourne from which no traveler returns, many years before the advent of the Smith children on the scene, but Henry Ward Beecher, the son worthy of his Father, was preaching in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, where we lived, so I had my share with Julia of proprietorship. As for Harriet Beecher Stowe and "Uncle Tom's Cabin," synonymous as they were in our minds, *they* were more alive with interest for us, gripping our imagination and stirring our feelings in an inexplicable way. *Now* I realize the writer was a prophetess with a message for all the world, young and old, of justice and humanity, and the world heeded the call.

I used to wonder why all the greatest men in the United States selected Litchfield to visit? To be sure, they could not have found a more beautiful place, but why should not the honors have been more evenly divided? If the whole Vaill family had not vouched for the truth of it, I should have thought Julia weaving romances for our entertainment, when she pointed out the houses where Washington, Lafayette, Aaron Burr, and countless other great men had lived and visited, dilating on the attending circumstances, creating visions for us of the most dazzling and romantic nature. Oh! that wonderful South Street with which I was most familiar, with its historic homes and noted owners,

surely neither time nor death would dare to mar the picture. To me Litchfield seemed then, the exemplification of permanent and unalterable beauty and enjoyment of life. It now seems to me as if God and time had laid a gentle hand where so much merit, worth and wisdom has abounded. Longevity has proved notable in Litchfield and permanence of ancestral homes exceptional.

This paragraph finds me still sitting on the stone seat at the base of the monument. With wondering eyes, a train of thoughts are chasing across my thought-tossed mind like a driving mist across troubled waters, when my son Ormond saunters across the road and sits by my side. I awake to the realization of present company, as from a trance; he glances significantly at the unopened book which I grasp tightly, as if in fear that it, too, might vanish and prove that I am walking in my sleep. I open the treasure-trove—"1721-1907"! Just where between this big gap do I fit in history? I read—

"To
All Lovers of Litchfield
This Little Book
Is Dedicated."

I am surely included in the dedication—though an errant lover. True am I, however, for, after forty-two years' absence, I am back, drawn thither by my love for those dear old days, my pulse quickening as if by a magic touch, and the old love springing to fresh life out of a long-buried past.

Almost the first page I turn presents the picture of the "Vaill Homestead"—my happy home for many summers. Even Ormond is stirred to eagerness and would turn the pages more rapidly, did I not stay his

impetuous hand to linger on the pages of indisputable facts and photos. "Did I not tell you, my son!" with triumph in my voice—" 'one hundred years and *more*' was what I said. Here it is in *print*—"The Vaill Homestead, *one hundred and sixty years old*,' and all the old familiar names are looking at me from the book saying, 'Here we are, Cora, still living in the pages of history!'—'Herman, Charles, Theodore, Joseph'—I knew them all (the 'Reverend Herman L. Vaill and his sons')." I did not know whether to laugh or to cry. But my son, with his youth and joyous nature, decided in favor of the laugh, and I found it easy to rejoice when I looked at him. I read on toward the end. "The present owner, Joseph Vaill—" "Yes, I knew Joe," I interpolated. "Joe, the soldier-boy, with the chestnut-hair, the twinkle in his hazel eyes: he was one who understood children—just like all the Vaills." And once more I fall to ruminating, when the present active young man broke in upon my reverie, "Come, Mother, and look at this enormous elm tree." It had a plate upon it stating that it had been used as a whipping-post in the old Puritanical days. We stood before it in its majesty, a grand testimonial to Nature and Mother-Earth, while the boy remarked sententiously, "I understand it has stood alongside the old jail for centuries. I trust that the mention of this sombre institution at least stirs no tender or *personal* recollection?" (He casts a quizzical, side-long glance my way.) My quest was a serious matter, but I could not resist the humor of his inuendo, and of course smiled a hearty smile. So much am I puzzled, however, so many questions crowding to my lips, that I determine to find a kindred spirit.



Flora Gold Vaill



Herman Landon Vaill



Cornelia Smith Vaill



Joseph H. Vaill

A little sign swinging in front of a tiny shop, on a grassy knoll, across from the nucleus of trade, attracted my attention. I drew closer and read, "Ye Olde Curiosity Shop." It looked suggestive and interesting. I step within. All is silent and deserted, save for the old mahogany furniture and colonial knickknacks. If only they could unfold the history enacted before their inanimate forms! I am conscious of a step coming towards me; I turn my head, and behold a pleasant-faced old gentleman. Did I say "old"? Do not forget, my lady, that *you* are no longer young enough to adopt that patronizing air, even though in this instance ten or twelve years may divide you from a contemporaneous point of view.

I start my little speech rather sadly—I fear something after this fashion, "Many years ago"! It reminded me of the octogenarian gravitating between eighty and ninety years who figured conspicuously in a play called "Hazel Kirke" ("many years ago," alas!) The preface to his long and tiresome tale was always the same—"Many year-ers ago—." The stage-folks had their cue to leave at his approach; therefore he never had an audience, except the legitimate one in front that had paid to be entertained, and who laughed at the poor old fellow talking to the air. He pronounced "years" exactly as I have spelled it, as if he hated to relinquish his hold upon the word! But it was only the "years" with "ago" affixed that interested him: the present or future years did not figure in his calculations. The tiresome, hackneyed phrase stuck in my mind, and I naturally vowed scores of times that I never would be guilty of using it. But here it is on

the tip of my tongue—my plaint, I confess, running much in the same groove. The substance of the remainder of my homily being, "Where, oh, where are the milestones of my girlhood?" I pointed across the Green significantly. "Ah, you mean the old frame building on the corner yonder which was the Mansion House?" he said with something that I construed as a responsive sigh. "Twice that entire block has been swept by fire leaving nothing but ashes," out of which had arisen, Phoenix-like, the new shops that confronted us. This, then, was the solution of my puzzle and a somewhat questionable relief to my mind. Noting my interest which re-awakened his memory, he went on, "Yes, it was in the early morning hours the last fire broke out, while all Litchfield slept. It was a fearful sight. The Court House as well as the Hotel you are inquiring about was destroyed, in fact, all the buildings from Doctor Beckwith's residence on South Street way beyond the Court House on West Street, all a mass of lurid flames, enough to terrorize all those who looked on, and I guess," he said, smiling, "that meant every one who could get out of bed, and some didn't take time to dress, either."

The Congregational Church? A new one has taken its place. I toss my head disdainfully as he points out the pretentious edifice. It is the *old* one I came to adore—the modest one in which I often sat with the other children, quite demurely, in the stiff-backed pews by the side of my beloved Miss Julia, thinking, I fear, of our docile steed hitched outside and of the long, lovely ride back home over the hills, the horses wading decorously through the brooks as behooved

them of a Sunday. I am sure they knew they had been to church. They could tell by the tolling of the bell and the gathering of their clan under the sheds and at the hitching-post. They could hear the singing of the hymns as the voices came floating out to them to the accompaniment of the organ; and the droning voice of the preacher reached their senses; so that in a vague way they must have realized this day was somehow different from the others. So they waited patiently, though nothing would induce them to hasten their part of the program at the brook. They would prolong the pleasure of the trickling waters playing over their hoofs and legs, while they sipped the clear, cool beverage like old epicureans. They were spoiled pets, and never a cross word fell on their ears, by virtue of their age—"Kitty," twenty-two, and "Bill," eighteen—the latter having gone through the Civil War with Joe as his aide-de-camp—coming back with one eye—a veritable hero, vieing with his master for honors.

All these things were passing through my mind, when he of the antiques continued—once more referring to the Church—

"The *old* Congregational Church which you seek has lost its spire, and has been moved back and around the corner, while the new edifice occupies the original site." "What a sacrilege!" I said, and cast a scornful glance in the direction to which he pointed. But indignity upon indignity developed—a *moving-picture show* has taken possession of the sacred house of God! My son unconsciously sat under the same roof the preceding evening, entertained with a photo play of trite import—sat thus in the hallowed

house of my dreams! "If a house could talk!" But the boy laughs at my dismay at this discovery: he is young; he cannot understand. The world seems out of joint to me, the balance terribly disturbed between reverence and levity. Is it possible that I am out of tune with the times in which I play a part. I am in active enjoyment of life, and participate in the marvels of the age; but there is an under-current that used not to be, sweeping me along to serious thought, even while the old Litchfielder is still talking. I must not be too sentimental. "Yes, I went to school with Julia and Abby," he was saying. A smile of remembrance illumined his countenance at the thought of his youth. My next question is an anxious one. "I have just read in this book," I went on, "that the present owner, Mr. Joseph Vaill, *now* occupies the homestead, but I note that the book was published seven years ago—what now?" "Joseph died a year ago; but the house was sold several years prior to strangers." I winced at the truth I was loath to hear. "How far do you call the distance to the Vaill property?" I queried (for so it will always be called despite new owners). When he answered, "Two miles," I laughed; I thought it must be five at least, having traversed that distance always at such a slow pace, even as the humor of our steed inclined.

In contradistinction to such prosy mode of travel stood our fine motor car, with its powerful engine fretting to be off. It seemed to be saying to me, "Come away from age and retrospection, and revel in the power I possess, to whisk you off two miles in the twinkling of an eye." In the car sit husband and son, tolerant and half amused at my vivid interest and agitation over a

foreign spot in which they had never played a part. Litchfield was just a country town in their eyes—beautiful, yes; but so were many others in New England through which we had just flown, but lacking the coloring of by-gone days to me. To the credit of our chauffeur be it said, his discernment was rare. He confided to my son that if ever he was in a position to select a home for himself it would be Litchfield. And now for the two-mile dash and a glimpse of the old Homestead, and the rocks and trees close by, that I loved. “How I hate the idea of strangers!” I am talking to myself, my eyes strained for landmarks as we pass over the old road. Yes, there is the first brook; and, before I could see it, there is the second. Now for a road on the left, one to the right—and the house at the fork, we reach it, pass it, and, before I can get the attention of Sanford, the chauffeur, we are chasing up a long hill through dense woods—something crying out to my perceptions, “Come back, come back!” and then I fully realize that the house at the fork, which looked so small, from the car, was my erstwhile home.

Never in all those summer months had I gone beyond the border-land of “our place” into the mysterious woods of the strange country beyond, for in the childish eye the “Homestead” was the world, the confines of which were the Vaill property, where the cows went no further because of the stone wall of rocks, on one side of which—“our side,” we picked bushels of huckleberries, and waded or bathed in the limpid depths of the wandering brook. The owner of this paradise was the Rev. Herman L. Vaill, a very dear old gentleman past eighty years of age, I believe, and retired many

years from the pulpit. He was a tall, slender man, with kindly courteous manner, whom the children seldom saw, as for the most part he kept the privacy of his own room, except for an occasional game of croquet or fishing jaunt. One day I saw him crossing the meadow, and impulsively ran after him. I had almost reached his side when I heard a little scream of pain, and saw him put his hand over the bandage which covered his face. But I must have been mistaken in my surmise, for he smiled reassuringly down at me, and began to talk of his friend, Isaac Walton, who had initiated him into the secret hiding-places of the beautiful speckled trout with the bright-hued dots that he brought home to us. He said kindly, but firmly, when we reached the brook, "You must run back now, my dear, for the trout would be frightened at sight of a little girl; and, besides, Julia would miss you and be anxious."

I learned several years later that he was suffering from an incurable malady. He was a Christian soldier of heroic mould indeed, fighting the good fight with marvellous self-repression and fortitude, just as he shouldered his gun and went forth to battle for his country in the war of 1812. Once only did I get an inkling of this truth from him of his condition. I was coming across the field from the brook where I had been wading, with my shoes and stockings in my hand; I brushed against a hornet's nest in the ground—covered from my sight by the grass, the indignant occupants of which swarmed angrily about me; fear lent speed to my feet, and I flew over the stubble screaming with one persistent hornet sticking to my bare leg with ven-

geance, despite my frantic efforts to dislodge it. I reached the lower step of the porch where I fell exhausted, with the tears rolling down my face. The old gentleman was the only witness to my calamity, standing pole in hand, his face still bandaged on account of that "terrible toothache." He said I must learn to master myself, and proceeded, "You cry for *one* hornet, while under this bandage there are a hundred hornets that sting me all day long." My mind was diverted; I nursed my poor leg silently, and did as he bade me, applying some wet earth as a balm to the sting. One summer we came and missed his gentle presence. We were told at first that he had gone off on a long journey. We did not dream that he would never return to the home where he first saw the light of day. As time wore on, however, I vaguely felt that the hornets had killed him, but asked no questions, dreading the truth. They tried to spare us as much as possible the knowledge of sad happenings, that we might gather strength in our youth to fight our own sorrows in that big realm called the Future. Now I understand how brave and unselfish they all were—he and his children who emulated him.

But while a whirlwind of thought is creating visions for me, we are still flying on in the auto, because the road is too narrow to admit of turning—not built for 1915 travellers—not mentioned in the "blue book." I am rather chagrined that I did not quicker recognize a spot that I had boasted was fixed forever in my memory; but it really did look very different as we passed it in an automobile. However, we are back at the gate before the two ladies who were loitering on the lawn

had parted—a gentleman on the porch in the background. Sanford alighted quickly, and in accordance with my request he inquired, “Is this the Vaill homestead?” The lady whom he addressed nodded in the affirmative, and her reassuring smile put me more at ease as she glanced my way. I then also alighted, approached her rather nervously and humbly requested that I might be allowed to walk about the place, the importance of which request being rather exaggerated in my mind; then, glancing at the other lady, who wore a hat and was apparently making her adieux, I came to a sudden halt, looking at her intently—I am afraid almost tragically—I said, “You are *Mrs. Joseph Vaill*—and I am Cora”! The tears were in my eyes. I turned away from the stranger to hide them, but not until I had caught the swift look of recognition in the eyes of “Nealy Smith,” who in those days was engaged to be married to “Joe” when I was there as a little girl. I had even gone to call on her with Joe’s sister to offer congratulations.

I forgot conventionalities, when, at the invitation of the owner, Mr. Bertram L. Lewis, I entered the old house. Indeed, I took possession of it for the time being, darting here and there, calling to my escorts to come and see the little nooks and crannies built there over one hundred years ago. Troops of intimacies came swarming back to my memory just like bees, buzzing toward this cubby-hole in the wall, that big beam overhead which hardly admits of Ormond or his father standing up straight. “If you open the door in the corner of the room which leads to the attic, you will find pencil-markings beginning low, and growing higher

inch by inch: these are the relative heights of the children who have laughed and romped on those old attic-stairs, finding treasure-troves in the antiquated trunks stored above—furbelows for the girls, and accoutrements for the boys, when the theatrical fever was high.” Our hostess, Mrs. Lewis, opens the door for our inspection. She must be a lady of sentiment to allow all that scribbling to remain, even in the face of temptation—for new paint and varnish is everywhere in evidence.

I do not dare to linger long at this sanctuary, but pass over to the room across the hall which conjures up anticipations of visitors, the guest room, where abided the most cherished of guests—my Father most frequently, and now and again my Mother, so fond of travel that she takes advantage of the opportunities that come with the summer months, when her chicks are in clover, to see some of the wonders of the world. “Their travel will come later.” Just now they nestle contentedly in Mother Nature’s lap. I seek the old “Sleepy Hollow” lounge; but, of course, it has run its course. How we did abuse it—alighting on it in a row like swallows, to study the giant map of the United States which hung above. This was the kind of travel which appealed to us, and long and many were the wonderful trips that we took. Our hostess points out of a rear window to a beautiful tree under which she saw only yesterday a young deer. She says there are many in the woods. I do not remember ever to have had the felicity of seeing such a pretty animal in my day. I suppose the quiet of the present time has wooed them thither.

As I pass through the house I note the rooms all

changed in pretty summer furnishings, but otherwise just the same, except the new bath-room installed in the wee room that was my studio, and where with paint and brushes I spent many an industrious and happy hour. Here is where I made the picture of the perch, just drawn from the water, arrayed on a bed of grass and clover leaves. I worked rapidly and long that day to catch the delicate and effervescent coloring of the little fellow, all shining wet, who had been drawn from the limpid depths of the little brook near by. Again, I strove to reproduce some of the sweet peas that Miss Julia nursed and coaxed up the sticks and on to the strings, until they became hardy and strong to climb up the back porch with their lovely pinks and purples. I still possess not only the memory but the little bunch of violets, on canvas, that was transferred there from the garden. How *she* did love flowers! The pansies were her favorites, with their wonderful velvet leaves and variegated coloring of deep and rich hues; and the trailing arbutus, with the first pink blush of early spring. They reached me every season before I could get there from my studies. She would pluck them from the damp earth in the dense woods, and pack the messengers in wet moss with some bright red berries, and send them to her "Cora Girl." I would bury my face in the fragrance of the blossoms and envy her. A child's mind is a wonderful piece of mechanism, holds so tenaciously to small things, absorbs things it never puts in speech, and stores them up, sometimes forever, sometimes till a spark touches the spot.

Mrs. Joseph Vaill also felt the spell under which I



The perch that was not born to blush unseen

was laboring. There were old memories aroused for her, too, old ghosts that talked silently, while a fresh bereavement showed in her saddened, thoughtful face, as she looked at me with the same sweet brown eyes as of yore. But she was not as familiar with the old house as I, for she lived in the "Red House"* with its "lares and penates" of other generations, on the road to Bantam Lake. It was a dusty little country road in those days; but now it proudly flaunts itself on the maps as a "State road," broad and fine as a State road should be, and is called Bantam Road.

It developed that the present owner of the place is a cousin of Mrs. Vaill's—that sounds so much more soothing than "strangers." We had a delightful visit, and, though I may never see our kind host and hostess again, I shall never cease to feel grateful for their courteous hospitality.

I am not sure that looking backward is a wise or profitable thing to do, but it has its fascinations, and lures one unwittingly on, tugs at the heart-strings, and is so insistent that the time comes when we yield to the still, small voice. Then do we become immersed in retrospection, regardless in this instance of the inconsistency of a recital where past and present allusions have become hopelessly entangled, and where magical jumps from one era to another take place, of which no legitimate chronologer would be guilty; with this apology, I will again take up the broken thread and make another connecting knot.

*Red House is a Bissill Homestead and pre-revolutionary by a great many years. The birthplace of Joe Vaill's two boys, Robinson and Theodore, and the maiden home of their maternal grandmother.

I have omitted to mention in our inspection of the house of dreams that one door remained closed, but it did not bar my re-awakened memory from looking within. Lingered on the stair-case, I said to Mrs. Vaill, who was just behind, "That was Aunt Hopkins' room"—pointing to the door. "Yes?" she replied interrogatively. She only lived through part of the first summer I came. She was the only real old lady I had ever seen, and now I believe exceptionally sweet and dainty looking—just the kind you read about, or those you see occasionally looking at you from the canvas, where some artist has softened the lines of age and idealized the face. She was the embodiment of all these graces in actual life, with the pink and white complexion of a baby—a silver band of hair under her lace cap, her mild blue eyes and gentle ways making her a most lovable creature. The children never thought of carrying on a conversation with her, for she seemed to have relapsed into a contented silence which we felt it would be an intrusion to break, accentuated, I fear, by lack of hearing.

She seemed always to be sitting in her own easy chair, looking immaculate. It appeared to me that Miss Julia—who arose early for the purpose—enjoyed dressing her as she would a doll, in those soft gray cashmeres with the white lace and linen collars to match the caps. One noon-day meal something seemed to stick in the old lady's throat. She had a coughing-spell, and was quickly spirited to her room on the ground-floor, just off the dining-room. We all looked up inquiringly when some one of the family came back to say, "It is all right, children—you may be excused."

We scampered away to our pleasures. About an hour passed when Miss Julia reappeared in our midst on the lawn. "My dears," she said, with a little tremor in her voice, "Aunt Hopkins is dead. I want you all to come quietly and say good-by, for God has called her soul to Heaven. There is nothing to fear or be sorry about, for she has been with us ninety years, and has died of old age." We all went in on tip-toe, leaned over and kissed her warm, soft face, and while her eyes were closed a lingering smile of sweetness rested on her lips. It was my first knowledge of death, and the terrors I had conjured up were dissipated at once through the ever-thoughtful and intuitive Julia. An indescribable awe, however, always took possession of me when passing through Aunt Hopkins' room, while my mind conjured up an angel hovering over the hallowed spot where she had breathed her last; and I vaguely thought that ages and ages hence "I must die, too, just like old Aunt Hopkins," and "there was nothing of which to be afraid." Every detail of funeral arrangements was carried out unknown to us in the early hours of the morning, and save for the under-current of thoughts, which must have been passing swiftly through the minds of those who realized the whole truth, no thought of sorrow touched our young hearts. So this was death! So quiet, so painless, almost considerate to come just at the proper moment when Aunt Hopkins seemed quite ready to take the journey, in her passivity and apparent indifference to this world's doings.

The only time I ever remember to have had an extended conversation with the dear saint was one summer afternoon when she had been wheeled in her

chair to a corner of the piazza, under the shade of the big maple tree, to dream, and follow our movements on the croquet ground. I remember I was dressed for the afternoon in one of those dainty white gowns that my Mother loved to buy or have made for me. It was a white pique skirt, reaching to the knee, braided "by hand," with a cute little Eton-jacket effect to match, worn over a soft mull and lace waist. A green sash gave the finishing touch, for that was my Father's favorite color. I felt conscious that I looked attractive. Miss Julia had said so, as she examined and admired the artistic design of the braided pattern of my gown while she smoothed my waving brown hair which fell to my waist. At the close of the game, as I passed Aunt Hopkins in her chair, I stopped to say a pleasant word. I was considerably piqued when she remarked, "My child, thy frock is much too short." After a surprised pause I urged, "But it is the style." "An indecent style," she said, the color heightening in her fair old face. "When I was young, like thee, I wore pantalettes to hide my limbs." "How funny," I laughed, "just like the colored prints in the old magazines inside." "Not funny," she replied warmly, "but maidenly and modest." She was such an old, old lady that I could afford to humor her, for I was young and knew all about styles; so I said as soothingly as I knew how, "Well, perhaps you are right, Aunt Hopkins, but you know styles *do* change." "Yes, yes, my dear, I know," shaking her head rather sadly. I bent my head to catch her voice which had dropped low from fatigue, "Thou art a good lass," she said, "but it is a shameless fashion."





"War Rock." On its top, the Vaill boys decide to go to war

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We emerge from the doorway, in and out of which that little maiden I used to be, had run and skipped with the others of which I am writing and thinking many, many times. We now sit on the new side piazza; the conversation becomes somewhat general with an attempt on the part of my husband to drop the personal note. My son, instinctively realizing the futility of this design, caters to his mother's psychic condition of mind. He admires the trees and the rocks (my old friends). I pointed them out by name. "Did you ever hear of naming rocks?" I asked. "These are all named like friends, and just as familiar to us children. That rock is "Harry," and that one "George," in compliment to two dear lads who lived in Tenaflly, N. J.; and that huge rock just outside the gate, under the elm, was called "The War Rock," for on top of this were perched the Vaill boys when the crisis in their young lives was reached, and they decided to go to war and fight for their country. Happily, they all returned; but a near neighbor was bereft of her three sons. A tall, gaunt, smileless woman she was. "I don't like her; she is so cross," I had said to Miss Julia at whose behest I had tripped gaily up the little garden-path to the back door and handed her the mail on our way home from the post-office. She took it from my outstretched hand automatically, without a word of thanks, and turned her face within to the gloom which enveloped the kitchen. I could not imagine anyone not enjoying letters—my own were so precious—but my kind Miss Julia, who seemed to understand everything, said to me, "There is no letter that will bring back her boys, and never a line will come again to her from one of them. There

are no thanks in her heart for anyone, for her heart is broken, and tragedy has written all those lines in her hard face. Once she was a comely woman, with the love-light of motherhood in her eyes; but now the thought is uppermost in her mind that never again in this life will she be called 'Mother,' and never again will she greet, or shyly caress, her own care-free, happy lads, who made the modest farmer's dwelling a beautiful place in her eyes, and cheery and bright, too, with their sallies and laughter. Her life has been a narrow one, but the routine of duties was sweetened by the thought that it sheltered and protected her little ones. She never had time, or mayhaps the inclination, to seek pleasure or diversion through any other channel. So now, robbed of the strong young arms on which she was beginning to lean, and the atmosphere which youth and youthful aspiration creates, she has grown hard and unresponsive. Not only has she closed the front door to the home, and shut out the sunlight from within, that she might not see the empty rooms so plainly, but she has shut the door of her heart as well, and no ray from the outside world has the magic to penetrate where only her boys had held sway, and they carried the keys of her heart to their graves." The next time I stopped it was with understanding; she must have read it in my eyes, for there was a slight relaxing of her immobile expression, and as time passed on my coming now and then would be the occasion of a feeble smile playing over the sad, stern face. She was indeed a martyr.

Another thread has snapped, I tie another knot and am reunited with the group on the piazza, my son is asking where the old croquet ground was—the scene

of so many battles royal. "There is the ground," I said, pointing to the only level spot on the knoll; "but it was much larger in those days." They all laughed, and my husband added, "So like a woman!" But how could that be the wide field of our earnest endeavors for championship? Such exciting contests they were, and I really did deserve my reputation as "Champion." My Father often took a mallet and played on my side. I loved to take his ball along with mine, giving evidence of my superiority which protected his interests. These games were the inspiration of the following poem:

HOW A HEART WAS LOST

The sun's latest rays the maple trees gilding,
And stretched on the greensward I dreamingly lay,
When Flora's sweet voice stopped my air-castle-building
By bantering me up to a game of croquet.
I instantly jumped to my feet all a-tremble,
And seized on a mallet the game to begin;
And I said, "Dearest Flora, I cannot dissemble—
I play for a heart, and am anxious to win!"

So beginning the contest with such an endeavor
As only is made when one plays for a heart,
I inwardly vowed she would conquer me never,
And brought all my skill into play from the start.
I led all the way, and I thought the game over—
I reached the home-stake, and I might have gone out;
But I gave her a chance of becoming a "rover"
When I saw the vexed beauty beginning to pout.

Oh, fatal mistake! How it grieves me to tell it!
I thought my poor heart with vexation would burst,
When she sent my ball spinning away with her mallet,
Then passed through her wickets and hit the stake first!
In vain for another encounter I pleaded—
With victory flushed, in a voice full of glee,
She said, "All your vows and your prayers are unheeded—
The wife of a 'rover' I never will be!"

The time is long passed, but a sad spell comes o'er me,
And back to the old spot my thoughts fly away,
And a scene on the emerald lawn flits before me,
When I think of the heart that I lost at croquet!
And now let me say to all jubilant lovers;
"When playing with Cupid be fully awake—
With the game in your hand, 'tis unwise to be rovers—
If you wish to be certain, go straight to your stake."

To take up the thread again, I will waive all further effort to make the sketch a continuous statement of facts and fancies, but put my thoughts down just as they grew and flourished during my short stay at Litchfield and came trooping to me after my return to Sayville, L. I., where I whiled away some pleasant hours in jotting them down.

The soil at one of the gateways was very sandy, and the boys built there such wonderful cities, with towers and bridges, tunnelling the mountains and building tracks, on which they ran miniature trains. Our visitors were few but when an occasional wagon-wheel crunched the cities which the young engineers reared, it gave them fresh incentive to rebuild. They were marvellous constructors, especially Charlie, who died so young, in his twentieth year. He had a technical mind and gave great promise as a musician. He was a composer in his teens, and in my eyes a genius, with just such a temperament, mild and non-combatant as became a genius.

Glancing up from our sand-heap, at the top of the hill in a snug little nest, lived Gertie Plumb. I can see her now as I write, coming down in her pink sun-bonnet under which the sun is striving to get a glimpse of her sweet face, a basket swinging on her arm. This

picture used to make me think of Little Red Riding Hood, though she didn't wear a red cloak and there were no more wolves, for Captain Joseph Vaill had driven them off this very spot over a hundred years ago, but that is ancient history and just now we are interested in reference to the little pink lady with something tasty hidden in her basket for "Grandma Vaill." Her frock is pink, too, the same hue as her bonnet, from which a few little curls have escaped and her eyes look clear and innocent. She was as shy as the squirrels that used to scamper over our rocks. No one but Miss Julia ever heard the lassie talk except in monosyllables on the occasion of these rare visits. She would stand and watch us at play with a certain wistful expression but resisting our efforts to draw her within the circle of our games. I imagine that she was a busy little bee, lending a helping hand to keep the farm house up there tidy and home-like, Mother's helpmate, who did not affiliate naturally with little city drones. Miss Julia would always appear at the psychological moment and so would Gertie's smiles and dimples, reminding me of the wild pink roses that had such a habit of climbing over our stone walls. Then, arm in arm, they would wander off by themselves; such a way as Julia had to invite confidence! I noticed, too, that the basket was never carried back empty for these were *real* neighbors and an exchange of favors was as ready as an exchange of greetings. I don't remember Gertie's mother except faintly nor do I remember her father, but he must have been a very good-natured man to allow us to ride on top of his hay cart laden with its rich crop of hay. I suspicion that Frank Bissell pulled the wires that placed

me on such a high seat of honor, thereby creating for me the most thrilling experience of my life up to that time, and, oh, the delicious perfume of that new-mown hay!

I thought then that Mr. Frank considered it a privilege to assist Mr. Plumb in the harvesting season, that he enjoyed driving the horses from on top, like Hercules as he seemed to me, but the ride was a short one in comparison with the long time it took to throw the hay up so deftly with the big fork until a load was completed, and I know now that Frank must have had some other incentive than mere love of work. Monetary considerations never entered my mind then, as Parents always attended to such trifling considerations. On reaching the barn we would wait patiently while Frank began the process of unloading until he promised he would let us know *when* and then we would scamper home. During the interval before that all-important summons reached us Julia's friend Frank must have labored long and diligently to arrange that wagon load just for us, and how thankful everybody was if only the skies were clear and the sun would shine while this work was going on, for we had terrible thunder storms sometimes when we were all corraled within, peeking timidly forth at the flashes of lightning—and drawing a little closer together when there were peals upon peals of thunder—our attention was diverted by the ever-resourceful Julia suggesting that we should take off our shoes and stockings in preparation for a grand rush outdoors—simultaneously with the sun's appearance and accompanying rainbow—to paddle in the big pools under the trees before they disappeared into

the earth, and to swoop down upon the plump yellow apples that were dropped from the branches by the violence of the storm. Such a scampering about! How it stirs me to recall the antics of those days! It seems to me I could go on indefinitely thus.

At sight of the old barn my memory runs riot. I recounted the many plays and tableaux enacted there—at times most thrilling, as when a band of diminutive but savage Indians, with war-paint and feathers, high up under the eaves of the slanting roof on the hay-mow, were planning a desperate attack on an adjoining hay-mow. At this juncture, very often, Julia—who was young enough to be our playmate as well as mature enough to be our mentor—would appear, and we would instantly forget all animosities existing between tribes, and clamor for a story—one of those wonderful real stories. She had such a gift for telling stories; and her favorite topic out in the barn, after Litchfield lore, was the far-away land of China. She described the immensity and proportions of the wall that hid the heathen nation from all human kind, and told us of their mysterious doings. The secrecy of their lives fascinated and held our attention the while we munched the taffy-candy she had freshly made to tickle our palates.

Then the time would arrive to feed the chickens and diligently hunt for eggs. On tip-toe of expectation, not to frighten the setting hens, we would move stealthily about peering into all sorts of hiding places which would outwit the ingenuity of man to plan. Those Vaill chickens were a knowing lot; so was old Minnie the cat, a feline fixture with so many broods of kittens

to her credit that she was a phenomenon in our eyes. We each had a pet kitten, with no end of competition for respective merits; but our season of proprietary rights was short; it was wonderful on our return the following spring to learn of their propensities for getting "lost in the woods." Their evident fickleness soon weaned us from their memory, and we transferred our affections to the new lot. Had their sad fate really been made known to us, I suppose we would have been irreconcilable. But of course it would have been impossible for all of old Minnie's progeny to have become domiciled at the hearthstone.

My chief delight was to watch the swallows dart like meteors in and out of the old barn, perching for a second in the shadow on the rafters beyond all reach; or, perhaps, wheeling about and flying directly out without alighting, in a nervous fashion—their lithe, clear-cut outline cleaving the air like an arrow. As the sun fell upon them at their exit, I would catch the blue of their wings, like unto the illusive shade of the blueberry—at times black, and again its own blue. I do not remember ever to have seen a swallow rest on the ground like other birds, or even on the trees; they appear to be ever on the wing—the typical "bird of passage." At times I have followed their movements over the water, skimming close, as I have seen a wind-blown sail, then rising without effort, far above the danger of the waves. I wondered if they liked to hear our voices in the old barn, and were speculating as to the meaning of our actions—no doubt just as mysterious to them as their oft-repeated and purposeless flights up to the rafters were to us.

But follow me into the land of long ago through the immaculate kitchen where Hannah used to preside—the nicest darkie girl that ever lived. She had dancing eyes, very, very white teeth and a healthy laugh, such as used to magnetize the children and keep them “under foot,” until their best friend would appear on the scene—whose name began with “J,” and who with pretended severity would “shoo” us all out like unto the chickens who had flown from their coop and were scratching on forbidden soil. Off we would scamper, peeking in at the windows from without with vigilant eyes for a signal to return, when the coast was clear, from our colored ally. I used to think I should like to take her home and keep her in our kitchen; but out of fear or respect for our Irish contingency I never mentioned this desire, though I believe my Mother would have sympathized with the idea, as she lived in the South in the days of slavery and owned a little colored girl—presented to her by my Grandfather, I presume. What a strange idea! But Hannah was free, and the Vaill boys helped to make her so. I am sure she had gratitude in her heart, for she was just that kind of a creature, an unspoiled product of the South, who had drifted into a snug harbor where her mistress, “Mother Vaill,” was a Christian who radiated peace and comfort, and whose daughter Julia was a natural-born philanthropist.

A kitchen in a farmhouse, where gentlewomen preside, is a very different affair from a kitchen in a brownstone house in the City—or such were my deductions at that tender age. Miss Abby, too, was a strong factor in the household. She went a step farther than the eman-

cipation of the colored race, and told Hannah that if she lived long enough she would be able to vote. She might as well have promised her a kingdom, but she was not joking. I heard dark hints at home that Abby was "Woman's Rights." I had a very incomplete idea as to exactly what that involved. It did not sound like a compliment, but I was sure that Abby was very feminine and appealing, very conscientious and earnest, and eager to help in a monetary way in the up-keep of her home and loved ones. I used to feel so sorry when I saw her poring over voluminous volumes big enough to crush her—all leading up to Ann Harbor, Mich., where she was finally graduated as an M. D. Years later I saw her established in an office in the City. (I mean New York, of course.) If besides her diploma of efficiency, her kind, sympathetic face could bring her patients, and her earnest endeavor to put her shoulder to the wheel could be rewarded, she would have succeeded; but her health broke down, for here is where woman cannot compete with man, even with a Vaill brain; so she was obliged to forfeit her dearly-bought knowledge, and retire from practice after a long struggle. I wonder if she can see from on high the army of Suffragettes marching along toward the fulfillment of her Utopian dreams.

There is such a troop of memories rushing in upon me that I seem eager to record, I can't quite understand the impulse. After all, what does it matter what took place over forty years ago in a little inconspicuous spot on the globe? Even an inconsequent conversation with a poor soul who had escaped the bondage of slavery, and was a human being amongst us, clamors for repre-

sentation on these unimportant pages; but the eyes that might have read the lines, the hearts that might have throbbed at the reading, are all gone forever from the Homestead and from this wide world—but that is a sad thought.

What I started to write was an amusing memory, with a desire to display my knowledge of the South. I said one day to Hannah, "Do you know the principal products of North Carolina?" Her eyes opened wide and round with a perplexed look, too suggestive for words. "Well, I mean, do you know what they raise mostly in North Carolina?" "Niggers," was her instant rejoinder, light breaking through her alert senses. I laughed so heartily for a few moments that the conversation was necessarily suspended. "Guess again," I said. "There are four things, but only one alive, and it isn't 'niggers.'" "Cotton," she ventured. "Good guess, but that isn't right." "Then I clar to goodness it must be watermillions." "No," I said triumphantly, eager for the disclosure. "The products are pitch, tar and turpentine, and mullets in abundance." It was her turn to laugh now—such a cascade of chuckles and ripples! Her effort to suppress the flood, accompanied by such queer gyrations, made me speechless. When she sobered sufficiently to talk she said, "Well, chile, I dunna bout bundance of dem mulsts in Carlina, but down dar in Georgy, whar I cum from, I kin see de millions shiny-like in de grass, and it look like dar aint nuffin in de wide world cept dem ar watermillions. But for lor sakes, chile, how ever did you learn all dat ere?" "Why, you see, Hannah," I said—a little piqued at the reception of my vast fund of knowl-

edge—"my Mother was educated at a young ladies' seminary at New Berne, North Carolina." This portentous finale seemed to sober her from gay to grave.

From this day she viewed me in a different light from the others, for there was love in her heart, and longing, too, "I reckon," for old "Georgy." I came closer than aught else in her strange environments to those longings which grow in every human heart for the place where they were born. Was I not, too, a "product" of one who loved that Southern clime? "Lor, Honey"—I can hear her say—"how you dun got such little feet?" She would get right down on her knees to look at them, and roll her eyes, to my delight. Her own pedal extremities were certainly on a generous scale. My long, waving hair, too, was always a great source of admiration, such a contrast in its smoothness to her own short, kinky locks; and as for my finery, her ecstasy knew no bounds. It was well for my bump of vanity that Hannah's influence was undermined by my perception of her limitation to judge. After the revelation of my Mother's affinities and attachment to the South, Hannah was on the *qui vive* to catch a glimpse of her. On the occasion of her next visit thereafter I caught a pair of black eyes, with a hungry look in them, following the flitting form of my Mother about the grounds. Her shyness prevented a closer inspection, and she almost collapsed when I took my Mother's hand and pulled her in to speak to her humble admirer, who behaved in a most aggravating manner, for while she showed her white teeth, she remained stupidly quiet. It was after my Mother's departure that I made a discovery. Hannah was a tease. "Sho, Honey, dat not

yo Ma; she, sho nuff, a chile hessef—yo foolin dis po gal.” “No, indeed, Hannah”—I insisted almost on the verge of tears—“she really is my Mother. You see she came North when she was sixteen, and married my Father just a few months afterwards.” But she would shake her head dubiously and repeat “Dat ere young woman no mammy of a big gal like you.” Then Julia the peacemaker would interfere with a reproachful glance in the direction of the offender, which seemed to indicate that some of the conversation had not escaped her. “Never mind her teasing, darling; some folks are not as blind as they appear”—a sheepish look and a guilty giggle from the dark one. “Only this morning a certain girl said, ‘Lor! Mistis Jula, Miss Cor and her Ma jes like two peas ’n a pod.’” Julia was a wonderful mimic. We all laughed heartily, and that was the end of this chapter.

Even the out-buildings, though divested of grace and beauty, had a halo of their own. Just outside the kitchen door, to the right a few steps, was the woodshed, part of which was partitioned off for the workshop, containing the wherewithal for the rehabilitation of all things visible,—each one who entered adopting the necessary trade for the moment suited to his or her purpose. A row of paint-pots on an upper-shelf, with a lining in each of about an inch of glutinous substance; while in the bottom of the receptacle—tin cans being most popular—remained perennially a few inches of liquid paint. We all had open sesame here, with one exaction imposed, that we should envelope ourselves in overalls or voluminous gingham—according to sex, that were kept on tap for this purpose; and then—paste,

whittle, paint or carve to our hearts' content. The boys modelled some marvels in boat-craft, for which the girls would contrive queer homespun-looking sails of unbleached muslin. These composite creations of our united efforts, admired as they were in the shop, seldom stood the test of poise and equilibrium when consigned to their ultimate and natural destination—the waves, their dignity being considerably compromised on such occasions, because of their tendency to turn over and navigate obstinately in this wise, though sometimes the weight of a few pebbles as ballast would cause great rejoicing among the skippers for a few seconds.

I was busy in the shop one day with the huge, flat brush—so unwieldy in my hand accustomed to handle the tiny camel's hair brushes. Charlie had asked me to paint his newly-modelled boat bright red, flattering my artistic touch, when I caught sight of Minnie with a bird in her mouth sneaking up into the wood-shed. I turned my head that I might not see the bedraggled wings of the dead songster, storing up a mighty lecture for a certain cat. I was in a trap myself—both hands besmeared with carmine, even if it were not too late to rescue the little victim of Minnie's rapacity. Later in the day when she came purring around to see if her pussies were being properly treated, I unbottled the vials of my wrath. "Oh, you wicked cat! So you do not exactly approve of the way your darlings are held in bondage with the ribbon harnesses attached to the paper chariots? You have feelings, for now you show anxiety. It does not hurt your babies—only puzzles them; but do you think of the little nestlings that are probably waiting for their mother to come and

feed them—the mother-bird you have killed! It is not your first offense, either, and it is a wanton cruelty, for it was not necessary for you to appease your appetite thus, as your sleek sides prove, and many are the tid-bits passed over to you. I want you to understand, Mrs. Cat, that I come from a long line of bird-lovers. My Grandfather was as skilled in catching mocking-birds as your Mr. Vaill is in catching trout, only he brought them home to tame and care for, away down South, where he lived many years, in North Carolina. My Mother, raised in this atmosphere, loved birds, and bred and raised them as naturally as she did her little children. They were always a part of our family scheme.”

Once she left the steamer at Queenstown and went ashore to seek an Irish goldfinch, which she purchased and brought back aboard the vessel. Lying in my tiny berth, I watched her solicitously studying the wants of the little fellow, too frightened to sing, tossed in his cage to the pitching of the mighty boat as she dove into the big waves. All the while I was *thinking* part of this and imparting the rest to the culprit, she was looking at me with a wise and fixed gaze as if to say, “Cats must be cats, little girl; and think of my little ones lost in the woods.” I did think, and relented a bit, and concluded that Minnie was a good cat, as cats went; but I would never have a cat, because I loved birds, and I have steadfastly adhered to this principle.

As we often sat at eventide on the porch, one would question the other what he would “give an old bachelor to keep house with?” That old shed with its multifarious contents gave me the secret cue for an inex-

haustible supply of contributions, that none but an old bachelor could use; but in this game to laugh is to lose, and I always lost. What did we do in the evenings? I will tell you, my dear. After a light supper of bread and cheese and kisses, or at least quite as dainty a repast of fresh eggs from "our hens," plenty of rich cream from "our cows," fruit from "our trees and bushes," incomparable graham gems and ginger-bread made by "our Miss Julia," we walked up Sunset Hill in the rear of "our cottage"—quite a pull too, and were generally at the crest to see the sun go down behind the distant mountain—Mount Tom, it was—that towered above the rest, and where lingered about his head the last gold and red streaks, always a fascinating kaleidoscope of gorgeous coloring arranged for our especial benefit, inasmuch as we were apparently the only beings visible. Then we would retrace our steps—Julia the shepherdess and her frolicsome lambkins. It is said that the one white lamb most precious in her sight changed color as he grew apace, and became almost proverbially black as he joined the big sheep on the broad highway of life, where she could not follow, and that he harassed her declining years even unto the end of her journey. She had "mothered" him ever since the moment that he had opened his baby eyes in this world, lying by the side of his young mother, a transplanted white rose, who had died three weeks after giving him birth, in a large city—for some inscrutable reason, about which I always kept wondering.

Mary was that sacrificed little mother, resembling the Madonna in her purity and sweetness, as I remember her in the reflected light of my girlhood as I

would a lovely picture. A transformation has taken place with the flying years—the baby to manhood grown; poor shepherdess fainting on her bent crook,—no longer able to stand the strain of a broken heart! she passed from this earth. Rich shepherdess! protected in that other world by the mighty arm of the Great Shepherd, even as she clasped that motherless little one to her breast—but again I digress.

How did we pass the evenings? Well, we would alternate our amusements with “I spy,” “Relevio” and bean-bags; or we would sit in the cozy little living-room and indulge ourselves in the choicest of all games, played with cards, “Quotations.” These cards—the work again of the indefatigable Julia, who with infinite care had selected the lines and verses from the authors and poets she most admired. It was like culling a bouquet out of acres of flowered plants. We grew familiar through this source of entertainment with many inspired sentiments and phrases, not realizing then that it was always Miss Julia’s plan to make pleasure profitable. My eyes ever invariably light upon one of these quotations of her adoption, like an old friend met in Litchfield. I fain would rob the real author of his laurels, however, and lay them at *her* feet. On one occasion, my brother who was a student at Harvard University made use of the quotation, “Heaven lies about us in our infancy.” Turning to me he said with the patronizing air that generally goes with the college youth, “I suppose you have no idea who wrote those lines.” Promptly came my answer “Wordsworth, a friend of Miss Julia Vaill’s of Litchfield, Conn.”

After these games, at which there was keen fencing and competition, we did something else, which you, my son, have never accomplished. I might truthfully go a step farther and say, in which you have signally failed, notwithstanding untiring encouragement and united coercion on the part of your parents—we went to bed *early*, and what is more to the point we went to *sleep early*.

Another thing we revelled in at Litchfield, which is a rare commodity these busy, eventful days, was plenty of Time. It was just one long dreamy day after another there, and “Time” always meant something pleasant was about to happen. To be sure we were familiar with the picture of “Father Time,” with his long white beard and equipments of scythe and hour glass, for had we not seen it often in the Almanac? He appeared to be just a tottering, harmless old man. How could we suspect at such an immature age that “Time” was a mighty creature, had lived for centuries and would live probably for centuries to come and that he had huge wings on his back to fly from those who tried to kill him. The only thing that appealed familiarly to me in the symbolic picture was the hour glass, for my Mother used to place a “half-hour glass” on the top of the piano when I was due to practice that length of time. Thereby frustrating her own endeavors to make a musician of her daughter, for I would rather watch the sand filtering through the invisible hole between the balloon-shaped glass bulbs until the contents of the top globe emptied itself into the lower one, only to start all over again if turned on the other end. “Sharps” and “Flats” were as naught compared with

this mysterious invention. How did they get the sand inside? I would give an occasional shake, but Time was regulating the toy in a most systematic manner. The sand running down on the even tenor of its way, and my desire to hurry things up a bit was never accomplished, so I would turn my attention in a desultory manner to the notes on the sheet of music before me, but my Father knew a great deal more about "Time" and its value than I did and after a couple of days relaxation at the "Manse," I would see him pull out his watch and study it with an anxious look, which sign I knew as a forerunner of his departure.

I learned that nothing I could say or do at this crisis would change matters. "*Time*" ruled the day. *Now I* understand what he meant when he said "Time and Tide wait for no man." Father would say more than once as he glanced at his watch—"Be sure and allow me Time to reach the station, Julia," then some sally would follow about "the good mare not being a winged steed." Julia would laugh and promise him "plenty of Time;" occasionally I had the felicity of driving my precious Father alone as far as the village. His facetious remarks on the way hither about "Kitty's promenade to town, etc., etc.," kept me bubbling with laughter, though I confess to a pang of remorse at such jollification at her expense, for what did she know about Time more than I? And besides I didn't believe that she had ever heard of "Dexter" which my Father persisted in dubbing her when out of ear-shot of her allies standing at the gate waving vigorous adieux to the parting guest.

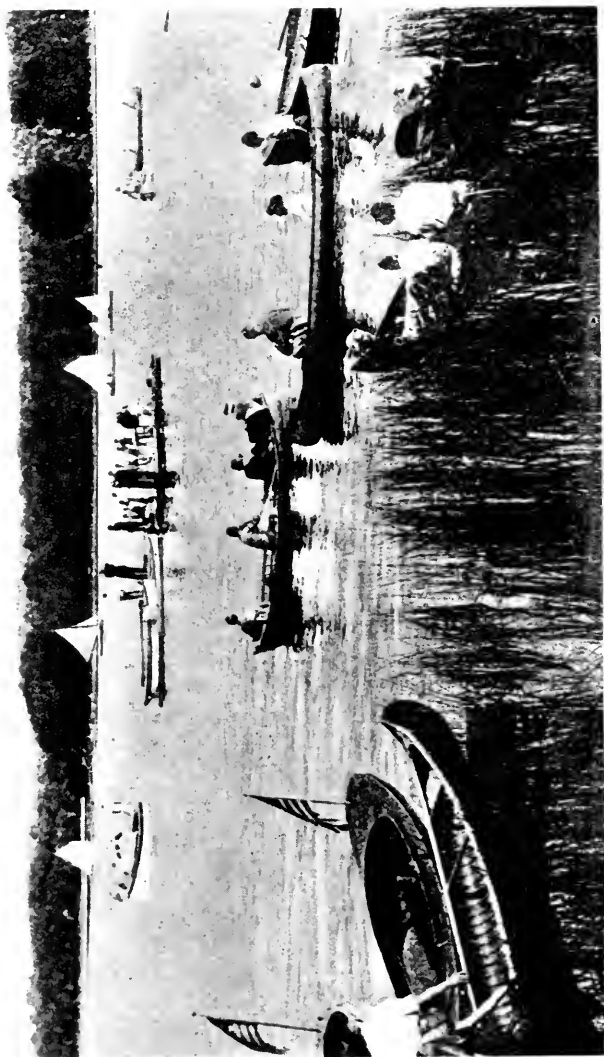
A lapse of flying years takes place at this juncture,

bringing us sharply back to nineteen hundred and fifteen, and Time has once more struck the parting hour. We are about to vanish from the scene. Mrs. Vaill is saying she felt that Providence had turned her footsteps to the Homestead that morning; she had had no idea of making that visit an hour before our meeting. She seemed to be moved in that direction by some unseen influence; in fact, her plans were distinctly different. She was sure some occult power had brought us together at the psychic moment. She had not been living in Litchfield for thirty years, and had come thither to visit a sister who lived in the village. Her own home was at Philadelphia, where her two sons had grown to manhood, and were now a part of the great business world. Her husband had died but a few months previous.

Leaving together our old haunts, she rode with us to Bantam Lake, where we used to go on picnics and fish for perch and water-lilies. My dear Father was always the inspiration of these occasions—for his visits were signals for all especially good times; picnics, stage-rides and general jollifications. The children adored him. I can see him hiding behind the big trees playing "hide-and-seek" with the same zest as the rest of us. As for Miss Julia and all the Vaill daughters and sons, they fairly lionized him. His letters—a few of which I will append—were read aloud many times, and deeply enjoyed by our little circle.

We are now on our way to Bantam Lake. Mrs. Vaill has offered to act as escort. We never would have had the courage to have continued along the elusive, winding road without her. An automobile





Bantam Lake

requires so much room, and is quite spoiled by the wonderful roads that have been constructed for its benefit, and always the occupants have in mind that it takes much width to turn, and that soft sand is a poor bed for a wheel which slips around and around without making headway. So often we are obliged to look askance at a cool inviting little lane where a horse would love to travel under the shade of the trees, and where we were wont to linger in our enjoyment. An automobile is quite out of place, it seems to me, in romantic spots, and rather spoils the picture; but, of course, without this mode of travel our view would be limited indeed, and Bantam Lake but a dream, though it soon became a reality.

With a little encouragement from one familiar with the country around about, the lovely sheet of water came in view. The car climbed a rather steep ascent, and we gazed down upon the sparkling lake through the beautiful grove of trees. I cast a furtive glance about for familiar signs, and coaxed my memory a bit, until everything began to shape itself quite naturally. I sat with George on a bench under the trees. He drew in a long breath of the fragrance and purity of the atmosphere and exclaimed, "What a beautiful spot! I do not wonder at your enthusiasm. So your Father has walked here with you—even as you and I. I wonder does he know we are here?" But I could not afford to have my feelings stirred too deeply, and besides, we had a guest. So again we ensconced ourselves in the luxurious depths of the automobile, and turned our faces toward Litchfield village. We drop the little lady of Litchfield birth and Litchfield gentleness at the door of

her sister's home, and journey on our way back into the practical every-day atmosphere of 1915.

Soon memory will sleep again peacefully, and in the whirl and excitement of the age in which we live we will drift rapidly on, leaving our son to stand on the shore of time, looking backward retrospectively with a familiar knowledge of life and a fuller understanding of all things, with, I trust, little to regret and much to comfort his mind in the thought that his parents found in him compensation for their losses and a definite answer to their longings and ambitions.

Good-bye, Litchfield, Good-bye!



Photos of the Gould family as they looked on
their visit to Litchfield in 1915

ADDENDA

IT was several weeks after finishing the sketch of Litchfield, purely from memory, writing the thoughts which deluged my brain and forced their way to my pen, in the environment of our summer home on the shore of the Great South Bay, L. I., before I returned to our city home in New York. In the meantime faint recollections of a packet of old letters, tied with a ribbon marked "Julia," entered my mind and beckoned to me like outstretched arms. I was eager to reach them like one returning to a first love. I confess they had long lain unread, were yellow with age, neglected and apparently valueless. Once more I revelled in their sweetness and purity, in fact, like old wine they seemed richer and more mellow with age, Julia's spirit breathing through them. It was not a childish infatuation built on prejudice, after all, but the soul of the woman who appealed to the young mind. With my present knowledge of the world in its many phases, with the capacity and means for enjoyment which has not been stinted, with my share of sorrow that has been poignant in the loss of those I have loved, every chord of my being having thrilled to joy or sadness, I look backward to the sum and substance of real happiness personified by Julia at that period. All the things I sought and strove to attain are as nought compared with her virtuous and contented mind, and a useful life lived to

uplift and benefit all those with whom it came into contact.

Judge of these letters. Do they not breathe of lovely thoughts and purposes?

Also I am including a few extracts from letters written to me by my dear Father, loving, facetious and redolent with originality, bearing on Litchfield, not forgetting the famous clipping from the Winsted Herald, which so long has hidden its light between the closed leaves of that old scrap-book.

OLD LETTERS

Litchfield, February 15, 1869.

My darling Cora:

It is Monday morning and everything about the old Manse is going on about as usual. Father has lain down as he generally does, soon after breakfast. Mother is sewing, Hannah working the machine, and Leander—well—I cannot say what he is doing because he went home to “Old Virginny” ten days ago to visit his family. He wrote us that he met his father and brother on the cars near Richmond and could hardly convince them that he was the little boy who followed the army away five years ago, for now he is a great broad-shouldered man, six feet tall. He intends to come back in about six weeks, and in the meantime one of the young men who has been reciting Latin to me this winter, is staying with us, to take care of the horses and cows. He is only seventeen, but nearly six feet tall, and full of good humor enough to suit you or me.

We go out about two evenings a week to some social gathering and Frank is a right nice young beau, and the rest of the time we keep busy enough, he with his studies, and I with reading, writing, sewing and domestic duties. The winter is flying away—I really wish it were just begun, there are so many books to be read, that the summer gives no time for. To-day we are having an ice-storm. The trees and shrubs are heavily loaded and bending gracefully with the crystal burden.

Old Minerva is beautiful as ever and often comes to be petted. Young Deadle is lying on her back behind the Morning Glory stove with her heels in the air. She was held and petted so much in the summer that now she is the condensed quintessence of laziness, she

lies down to wash herself! Our last social gathering was held at Mr. Pettibones, at the upper end of Worth St. (you remember, the gentleman who has the school to which all my S. S. girls go) and there were about two hundred present. They had some fine tableaux. Ella Adams and Eva Colvocoresses were in a lovely one, a Gipsy scene, and I had to act a Pantomime with Mr. Woodruff, our S. S. Superintendent, but it would take two sheets of writing to describe all we did, so I will leave it to tell you.

How often, my sweet Cora, I think of you, and wish to put my arms around you! Do you still go so far to school, and go without your dinner? Whenever you come into my mind now, you are pale and changed, as I saw you in Brooklyn, and it distresses me. If you are doing better, do let me know, it would be a great relief. How are your Father and Mother, and your brothers? Please tell your Father the "N. Y. Weekly" comes regularly. Father sends his thanks for it, but wishes me to say he hopes you did not think he asked for it in that way. He only suggested you should send *one* paper to let him know his letter had been received.

His neuralgia gets worse instead of better, I am sorry to say, and has about lost the use of one eye. The doctors give him no encouragement as to recovery. He has no croquet to beguile the weary hours, and for his sake I wish summer were here again. I hear frequently from my little folk at Ivy Tower, and on the 27th of this month I shall look for letters from all of them as usual and hope to hear from *all* the dear children who love me, on that day, for my birthday comes on Sunday this year, the 28th, and I always love to have it come because it brings me such a sweet packet of love-letters. I have spent a delightful winter, as busy as a bee in clover-time and so happy, too, that I hardly know what to make of it, but I suppose the secret of being happy is to have a-plenty to do for others and not to have much time to think of one's self. Now, my darling, may I not have a birthday letter from you on the 27th? Father thinks it would do him good to get a letter from you. He and my Mother send a great deal of love and so does Hannah, Bill (war horse) and Kitty (gentle mare) would if they knew of my writing. Good-bye.

Your loving friend,

J. M. V.

Home, June 10th, 1869.

My own dear Cora:

When I first came home Julia gave me the sweet little letter she received from you, on her birthday, to read, and I immediately said "I am going to write to Cora this very day." But that day passed as many others have since, with so much to be done in each one, that letter writing seemed the last thing to undertake. I have been

home just five weeks. The weather is still very cool, but the country never looked more lovely. We have played croquet but little yet, as there were so many things to do in-doors, but now we shall have more leisure and mean to practice up before you chicks come.

Charley and Kitty are coming a week from Friday with Mr. Barton. I wish you were coming then too. My sister Abby heard at Mr. Redfields that your Mother was quite sick. I am very sorry to hear it and hope she is not going to be troubled with those attacks as she was last summer. Father has been trouting all day and I presume had very good success, although I have not seen the contents of his basket. His health is some better I think, except his eye, which is quite painful. We have two lovely white kittens, they are about six weeks old, and begin to be very cunning; one of them has dark eyes and the other the lightest and brightest blue.

Hannah often speaks of you, and just now when I asked her what I should say for her, she responded, "give her my love, and I want to see her very much." Mrs. Redfield wrote that Jennie would not be here before the 12th of July, but you shall room with either my sister or myself, and we will take care that you do not get lonesome. If you have any little girl friend, who would like to come with you, and whom you would like to have here, you could bring her along, as there will be plenty of room. Of course, I cannot expect *such* a sweet letter as the one you sent my sister, but if you can find time to scratch off something for me, I should be delighted to receive it. Remember us all to your Father and Mother. All send love to you, my dear, and hope to see you soon.

With much love,

Your sincere friend,

MARY W. VAILL.

Litchfield, July 24, '69.

My darling Cora:

I have been looking for a letter from you but concluded you are so happy at home again with your brothers and all around you that you forget how we want to hear from you. I expected to feel lonely after you left but there have been so many coming and going that it has seemed quite lively. The day you went, three young gentlemen drove up from Washington, Conn., and spent the day. They were fine croquet players and made the balls spin around as they haven't before this year.

Two mornings I amused myself raspberrying, found six quarts of the nicest large ones I ever saw without going out of sight from the house! Then I made them into jam and it is delicious. Last Thursday, Robert Holly came from Brooklyn. He is a real fine young man and I think we shall like him very much. He spends

most of the time out of doors with the children but gets a Latin lesson daily which I hear at ten a. m. You know I was rather dreading to teach in Summer but now I'm sure I shall enjoy it.

Willie Beebe has just passed a fine examination at Yale and is coming to visit us on Monday. I have invited a little party for him in the evening. Jenny is coming on Tuesday, also my Sister Abby with little Robbie, and on Wednesday another Sister will come with Minnie and Fanny Lyman! How happy we shall all be then!

August 1. Here I am again, my dearie, and all that I expected would happen has come to pass with a good deal beside. You might know I couldn't write with so many little arms hugging me at every turn. M. and F. will visit us for two weeks, perhaps longer, and I have planned an excursion to the pine woods, one to the Lake and another a huckleberry picnic. Little Fanny, not yet nine (will be next Sat.), is the best croquet player on the ground, and Robbie only three and a half, is one of the most winning, dear little fellows I ever saw. He is everybody's pet and yet not spoiled. You would devour him as I do. It is *impossible* to tell on paper how sweet he is. I have been to church to-day and now Jenny and Charley sit near me in the bay window, reading "Young Folks" and Robert Holly, Minnie and Frank are writing letters to their friends at home. After supper we shall all go to walk up Sunset Hill. You and Mr. Barton will not be here, what a pity! But Mr. B. is coming soon to spend two weeks and will miss you I know. Several times every day I hear some of the people say "I wish Cora was here," and I echo the wish in my own heart every hour. I should love dearly to hear from you, and better still, to see you.

Good-night and good-bye, with kisses on the top from your loving
J. M. VAILL.

Litchfield, February 14, 1870.

My darling Cora:

You may have any number of Valentines but none of them will contain so much love as mine for I am "full up" as the children say. Do not think I am the less loving because of my long silence. Many hours I have set apart for you when some hungry care or duty comes along and eats them up. Frank and I talk of you very often and wish you could be with us to enjoy the sleigh-rides and cozy winter evenings. The evenings at home have been the best, however, for we have had few interruptions and have accomplished a deal of good reading of Histories, Travels, Science, etc. F. thinks it the best winter he ever had and I say "ditto." He is full of life and fun as ever and that keeps me lively.

My dear Father has not suffered so much as last winter, still he

is not well and keeps on taking medicines. I am in hopes he will feel much better when Spring fairly warms the air. My Mother has been very well, and I have been pretty well, although not so strong as I would like. Should hardly dare to try muscles with you now.

You heard about Jack's and Hannah's wedding? They are house-keeping just this side of Town and come to see us occasionally. Our family is so small now, only four, we are doing without a girl and like it wonderfully, yet it does keep Mother and me very busy nearly all the morning, and then after my teaching F. in the p. m. I feel too weary for anything in the evenings except reading.

We had a terrible snow storm last Tuesday, which left the roads bare, except in spots where it is badly drifted so now there is no more travelling either with wheels or runners. It is the first really severe storm we have had.

We are invited to a party at Frank's father's tonight and I shall have to walk across the fields with Frank, but that we don't mind as the drifts are hard and do not break through. The party is made for his older sister, who has come home from New Haven to spend a week.

One day not long ago it was so warm and pleasant, we played a game of croquet and I was beaten! If you had been on my side it would have resulted differently, but Frank shows no mercy. He has just received a Valentine about "The First Cigar." I do hope he will never smoke.

My boy Georgie (Lyman) has passed a fine examination at Cornell University and is doing well there. I hear from him very often. Harry feels lonely enough without his brother, says he feels sometimes as though he could not live another minute without seeing him. But he will enter there next year and then they can be together again.

I wish you could see the plants in the dining-room bay window. It is all aglow with scarlet salvia and other blossoms.

On Christmas, Father had some musicians sent him, the "Industrious Fiddlers," and they keep it up, night and day. I often hear him singing to the music or laughing at their droll sobriety.

It seems a great while since I have seen you. I was greatly disappointed at not finding you in Brooklyn in October. If it had not been for my Sister's wedding coming so soon, I should have stayed to find you, for I have been looking forward to it with such desire that I was not at all reconciled. That was a dear, sweet letter you sent me so long ago and although I have not answered, to deserve another, I hope you will be a forgiving little Christian and write me for my birthday, which comes on the 28th of this month. Can you have the heart to refuse? I think I feel you giving me a

sound hugging for answer. Oh! I long for one of your thorough hugs.

My Brother Joe spent last Sabbath here with his wife and he is at home again today. He sends love to Cora. We also have visiting us my Aunt, Mrs. Brinsmade, a sweet old lady. Father and Mother send love to you and I presume Frank would if he dared. Please give my regards to your dear Parents. Also to your brothers. I haven't heard a word from Jennie since she left. My love to her and Lottie.

With heaps of kisses,

I am your ever loving

Frank says he dares.

J. M. VAILL.

My darling Cora:

Litchfield, April 18, 1870.

It seems absurd for me to begin a letter to you because I am "so full up," as Kitty says, that I shall be sure to get my sentences all in a heap; I mean, there is so much to tell you.

Oh! what *wouldn't* I give to have you here to go in the woods with us for Arbutus. Mr. Frank has agreed to bring his sisters over on Thursday and we are all going to the top of Brush Hill Woods, where the beds of Trailing Arbutus grow so thick, it is enough to drive one wild with delight. Last Spring after going there I dreamed every night of the most heavenly clusters of flowers that ever mortal saw. I always want my friends around me when gathering such flowers. The pleasure is too keen to be enjoyed alone. I should like to see your face once, just as you came upon a hidden mossy nook, all aglow with the fragrant pink and white beauties.

Minerva has five of the dearest babies. We are going to keep them all so that if you and your brothers should come up, you could each have one to harness. They are beginning to play like witches. This morning the Mother cat concluded she would bring the family into the house and so she came with them in her mouth, one at a time, and laid them down by the fire. Mary is holding one and I another.

My Brother Joe and his wife were with us yesterday. They sent love to you and my brother said he hoped that you would come up and that I might tell you he should be delighted to beat you soundly at a game of croquet. Mr. Frank comes over to play pretty often.

I was very glad to get your nice birthday letter and have wished to answer long ago. Haven't even answered Harriet yet, which came the same day, but have had many others to write which couldn't be put off. Mary seems just the same as before she was married. Wasn't it good in her to come up just to see to my dressmaking?

Do you know that dear old Kitty is dead? She got hurt in the stable three weeks ago and we found her dead in the morning. She is buried in the Pond Lot. My Brother is going to send us a new gentle one when Charley and Kitty come on the first of May. This must be a short letter for I have no more time. Write me when you feel like it. Please give my regards to all your family and remember me,

Your dearly loving friend,

J. M. VAILL.

Father is very much better; will be playing croquet soon.

Litchfield, Conn., Feby. 12, 1871.

My dear Cora:

A real old fashioned north east snow storm is raging today and piling its drifts about the old manse as if it meant to lock us in this time sure enough. I have been reading a sermon to Mother and Aunt Everest, but now "church is out" and we have eaten our lunch, old Minnie purring and waving her tail about the room to keep her spirits up until her turn came. The mercury stands 16° below freezing, but it is almost summer heat in the dining room and the bay window is a pleasant greenery to look upon, geraniums, oleander, salvia and calla in blossom and some little shrubs of mignonette, that make the air all fragrance. You see I have time to take care of my plants in the winter. The day your letter came to Father I was wishing I had written to tell you of his approaching birthday, knowing how much he thought of little friends' letters. He was much gratified with yours, also with the poem for your birthday. He said it was beautiful and *true of Cora*. I think it one of the truest and sweetest things I ever read. It is a legacy, Cora, which you may well treasure as long as you live. We miss Father more and more, and yet I cannot realize that he is gone where I shall see him no more in this life. How he loved the children! His memory will be fresh so long as they live, I am sure. If I could only remember how he *used* to be more and forget these last months of intense suffering, I think this pain in my head would go away. It comes on whenever I try to write. I have been wishing to write to you all Winter but have had many letters to answer from friends of Father's whom I have never seen. They are such good, kind letters I should love to answer them if it did not hurt me so. My Sister Abby has been spending a week with us, but her visit was far too short. The Lymans want me to spend March with them in Tenafla and Mother says I need the change and must go, so I suppose I shall, but do not see how they can spare me either. If I go, I shall stop in Brooklyn a

few days and shall hope to see you. Why! I must see you! The dear little baby! Her picture is in the corner of my glass and I often say, "Poor little Lamb," or "Ah, Toady! Doodle do?" The day she left I asked her if she was going away to leave me and shaking her little head she said, "No, *never* going to leave Auntie Julia, *no, never!*" I only hope the little waif has strayed back to heaven. I had a most charming visit at Cornell University with Georgie and Harry in October, but I must *tell* you all about that some other time. The little Plumbs go to school and some of them are in to see us almost every day. It was fine sleighing all last week and yesterday I drove down to see Miss Nettie. Sister Nealie is soon coming from Winsted with young Robin to spend a month. The little fellow is full of life and fun and the little mother is all devotion to him. They make a very sweet picture for the chimney corner.

How the storm drives! But we can snap our fingers at it so long as the ruddy "Morning Glory" coal stove sends its glow from its twelve bright windows. I wish you could see how cheerful it looks.

Please give my love to all the family, keeping a good share for yourself.

From your friend,

J. M. VAILL.

Litchfield, Conn., Dec. 22, 1872.

My dear Cora:

For *weeks* I have been saying that I would write to you and yesterday something occurred to precipitate the determination. I took Mother and Baby B. out sleighing and calling at a friend's in Bantam was asked if I knew *Cora Smith*?

It seems the enclosed letter went from Dublin to Washington City, then to Litchfield; thence to a Mr. F. L. Smith in Bantam, and by good fortune fell into my hands. It would have done you more good if received when you were homesick for letters in a strange land, but I'm sure you will be glad to get it even at this late day. I hope all the other letters you missed have found you before this time.

The sun shines in very brightly through the plants, but the air must be nipping without, for there is a keen wind and the mercury stands at zero. Last evening I took a sleigh ride, mercury standing only 6° above zero, but the air was so perfectly still we were not at all cold.

Baby Theo has been so full of fun and frolic all the morning I have not done much but play with him and now he is in his crib for a nap, but if you could hear the peals of laughter, you would

think sleep must be a good way off. Never was such a merry little elf. He is now nearly twenty months old, and is good company. A perfect chatterbox! In the night he tells me all he knows about "Papa—gone—cars—chu! chu! Abby—cars—Bookin—Billy—corn—cow—calf—dog—bow wow! Antel Duah!" and so it keeps up till I say, "Oh, Baby, do stop talking and let Auntie go to sleep; Auntie feels bad!" He jumps up and says, "Baby *kiss* Antel Duah," which he thinks will cure all things, then lies down and begins his chatter again. Old Minnie has two pretty kittens, great playmates for Baby. He tries to sit on them, but by the time he is seated, they are gone from under. He shows them his playthings and if they mew he kisses them.

The "N. Y. Weekly" continues to come to our box, directed to George. I ought to have spoken of it long ago, but being farmer, housekeeper, baby-tender, etc., I neglect things which I would like to do. Please notify your Father that it may be discontinued. I am trying my best to get time to read a work of L. M. Child's in three large volumes, "The Progress of Religious Ideas," but make it out only in bits. Your Father would enjoy it and so I think would you.

Our good Prussian remains with us another year (and I hope always). I am teaching him English in the evenings and he teaches me German. George and Harry Lyman are still at Cornell and write me German and French letters. A life of study! Oh, what a delight! but there are many other things to do, and a life of study would be vain unless the wisdom gained were used to make the world better and happier. You must often be reminded in a gay city of the words, "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment."

It is a sad pity so little is thought of mental suicides by those who commit them daily. I wish I could see you, Cora. Cannot you come up and spend the Sabbath some time with Mr. Barton? Our family is small in the winter, only Mother, Baby, myself, John and Ellen, a very nice Yankee girl. We have occasional visits from friends and relatives. My mother's health is much better than during the Summer and Autumn. Hoping your Father, Mother and

Joy Tower, Tenaflly, N. J., Oct. 2, 1873.

My dear Cora:

Can you not come up to Litchfield with us on Saturday? Mr. Barton will take Baby and me up there on the 3:15 train, Shepang Road, and we reach home at 9. Then he returns on the early morning train, bringing a lady who has been visiting Abby. You spoke

of going up some Saturday and this will be far the best one, because it will soon be dreary for you in the country and there is no telling when Mr. Barton will go again, then besides you will get acquainted with Baby on the way. I should rather have Ormy and George come at some other time. Charley, Kitty and Rob will probably be at the cars to see us off. You will not need to write me, but we shall look out for you early at 42d depot. *Do! do come!* I was sorry you couldn't come around Tuesday eve; we had a fine time. With love,

Yours,

JULIA VAILL.

Litchfield, Dec. 2, '74.

My dear Cora:

Several weeks ago my sister Abby mentioned seeing you and said you did not receive my reply to your letter written from London. I am sorry because it was a long one and I wanted very much to hear from you again. I sent it to N. Y. for your Father to forward.

How are you all now? Let me know what you are doing and thinking. Do you keep on with your painting, and how are your dear Father and Mother and the boys? There's a volley of questions for you! I suppose my sister told you what a house full of children we had. All my Lymans here at once except two. Seven of them! They are all recovered from their chills and fever speedily and the last one left with Sister Lizzie last Tuesday.

Our family is reduced now to its minimum. No one but Mother, Baby Theodore (now a great boy, more than three and a half years old), myself and Ellen, the girl who has lived with us more than two years, and the man, Michael.

We had several lovely little girls here during the summer that I became very much attached to. I know you would love them, and my boy, Harry Lyman, now a young man, was here also more than three months. We had capital times together, walking and taking drives by moonlight and read aloud Oarton's "Life of Jefferson," and some other things. He wanted to spend the winter here and go on with his studies, but it wasn't best. He is a lovely character and we miss him very much. I have lately made a visit at Winsted, taking Theo. to see his little cousins. I spent most of my time at Brother Joe's, who has but one child, Robin, nearly a year older than Theo. They made music enough together. Sister Nealie is just as sweet as ever. To think you have never seen Mary's child yet! I think you would love him, because I love him so much; still, he is full of *stuff* and has some naughty ways, is wayward and quick,

but very affectionate. It would make you laugh to hear him talk, so quaint, and he remembers everything. I want to invite some friends during the holidays, but have promised Ellen the week to go home, so must content myself alone this time.

Do write me all about yourself, my darling, and excuse this hasty apology for a letter. With kind remembrance from Mother and myself to you all, and my old love for your dear self, I am,

Yours,

JULIA.

Litchfield, Conn., March 28, 1875.

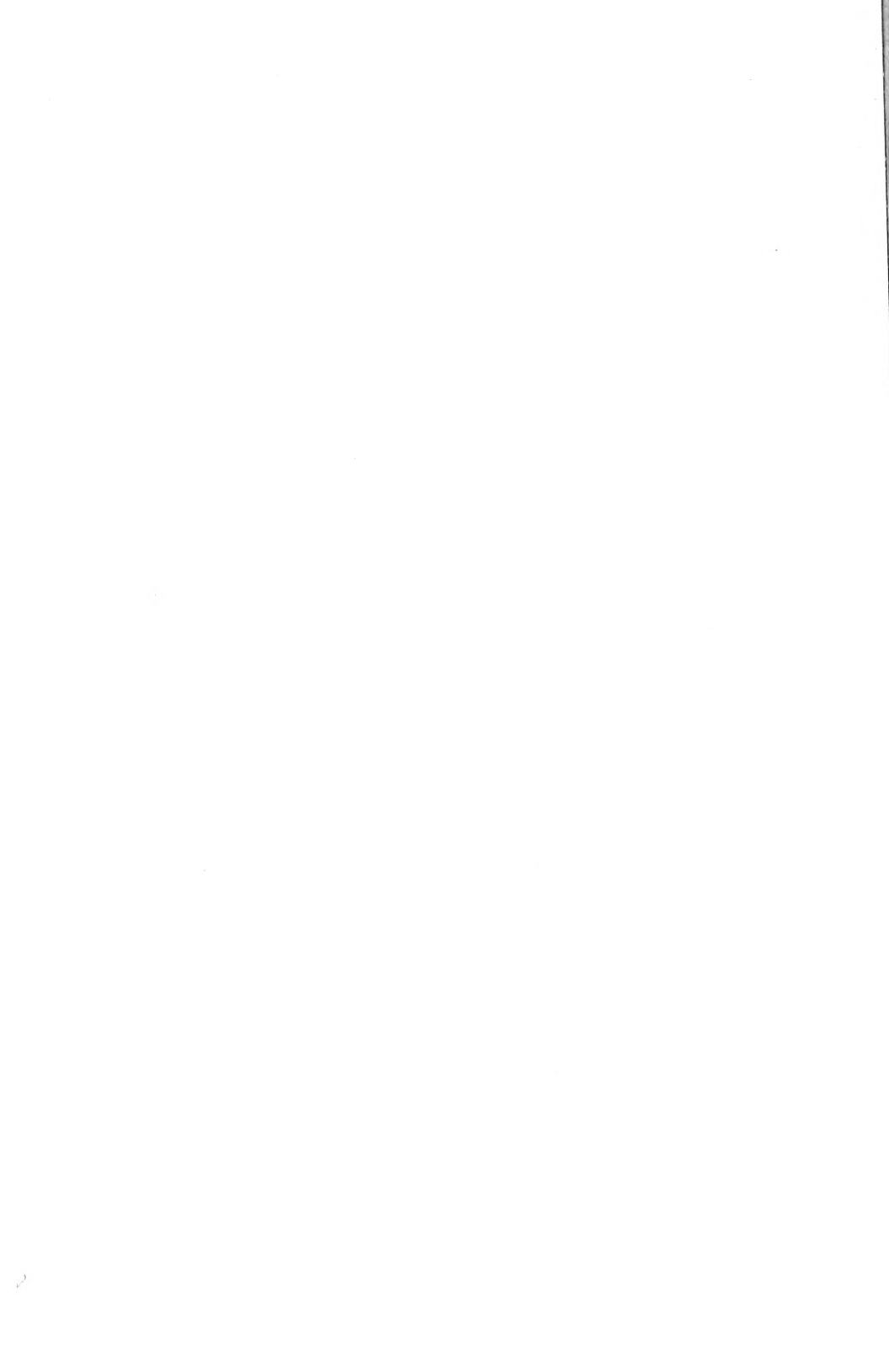
My Always Dear Cora:

Your letter was received on the 1st Jany. Can it be so long ago? One would think our life must be dull, shut in here with piles of drifted snow and plenty of time for letter-writing, but a housekeeper that has a farm to look after and a little boy bobbing around me in perpetual motion, finds life full enough of action. On the 7th of Feby. my brother Joseph came from Winsted to take me up to see my brother Theodore, who was very sick with pneumonia. He could not speak to me and died in a few hours. He left a young wife and a little girl and boy, besides a host of friends and relatives who loved him most tenderly. All of our family were gathered there on the 10th to take a last look at our loved one till we meet him again, glorified. There are few funerals like his. After the services at the church, and the great concourse of townspeople and friends and army comrades had departed, the parents of my brother's wife insisted that we should all return to their house, for the young wife felt that her home was now too desolate for her and the little ones, even for an hour, and so we were all together and our *sorrow seemed almost like joy* as one and another spoke of the lovely traits of character our brother had. In the evening they were singing the sacred pieces he loved, and Alice, whose place had always been at the piano, listened for awhile, then it seemed as though she could not keep away, and taking her seat among them, played *his* music while they sung, and it seemed as though he *must* be with us in the spirit. He was always a most loving and tender brother and his wife said, "He was the *best* man that ever lived."

Our little Theo was with me and the organ music was so sad and solemn, it set him to sobbing. Even his Papa could not comfort him by promising to stay with him till the next day. He asked me, "Is Uncle Theodore seeing my Mama now?" Dear little fellow. He is sick with some double teeth that have been trying to cut for several weeks and has spells of feeling pretty bad and now says,



Theodore F. Vaill



"I don't want you to write *at all*, Auntie, I want you to read to me."

Tuesday. My Dearie; what a sweet day. Theo and I have been out all the morning—sunning. The earth is bare in patches and the happy flies are buzzing out of the dry grass. The drifts are still two and three feet deep all about and no travelling on account of the bare spots, but this blessed sunshine will soon set the roads in order. You have had a busy winter with your French, music and your beloved Art, but there have been quiet times when your mind has lived over again some of the childhood hours at the old Farm, when we had the stories on the sofa, or in your room in the dark, and the image of a plump little dot chimes in with: "*Ah Tody! doodle-doo?*"

We have had some dear, sweet little girls here since then, and some that I dearly love (our Fanny Smith of New York, with whom I am corresponding all the time, and I have lately received a fine picture of her), but none of them fill the place of *Cora*. That always remains "Sacred to the memory." I shall hope to hear from you again and how you all are. I trust your dear Father's trip to Cal. was a benefit to him. If you should carry out your plan of returning to Europe this spring, I should be pleased to hear from you and hope my letters will have a surer transit another time.

My Brother Joseph and family live in Winsted and he is now editor of the Winsted Herald in place of his brother, who died. I will send you a paper with notices of the press concerning Brother Theo. if I can get one. There were several hundred extra but they may be all gone.

Sister Abby is still in N. Y., but will be with us in a few weeks, I trust. George and Orm must have grown a good deal since I saw them. Theo says he remembered them, but that is rather doubtful.

I wish you could see my bay-window full of blossoms. It has been very bright all Winter. Our neighbor, Mr. Plumb, has started a greenhouse from which he has cut flowers during the winter. My Mother is very well and active for one of her age. She sends her love. I am letter-writing quite unsatisfactorily when I see a friend so seldom and really knows so very little about her as about you, still, *I am quite sure you will keep this little oasis green in your memory for a long while.* I should love to fold you in my arms and talk with you for hours, but perhaps that time will never come. It seems farther off than ever now. I comfort myself by thinking, "*In Heaven there will be time for everything we love to do.*" "*Six days shalt thou labor!*" is the strict command and we must follow it each in our small way as best we can, in order to

have the pattern complete; there is always something to do for somebody, *somebody's* child to love and lift up. But my dear little Lamb is calling for me, so with a kind remembrance for all the family and the *same old love for yourself*, I am,

Yours,

J. M. VAILL.

My little Boy says, "I want you to make a box for me to put a kiss in for Cora," so here it is:



Litchfield, May 12, 1875.

My dear Cora:

Your letter was received on Saturday and gave me much pleasure. Sister Abby has been all through the Brush Hill woods today in quest of the "May Flower," but not finding it as nice as usual, we afterwards went to the Pine woods where we found lovely mosses, pigeon berry vine and Arbutus buds. It brought to mind the time of our little picnic. The woods were full of thoughts of you, my darling. We have been getting the flowers ready to send to several friends and I am going to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning and take them to the early train, hoping they will be received the same day. The moss will keep green indefinitely if kept sprinkled. I send *buds* mostly as they will come out if put in water that is *not too cold* and hope you will be able to reproduce some of the sprays and pigeon vine. Little Theo. heard some one mention Paris today and said, "Why, that's where Cora's Mamma has gone, with George and Ormy." (He heard me read it in the letter.) It is late and I am weary, so you will, I know, excuse my brief note.

With my kind remembrance to your dear Father and to the others when you write them, I am as ever,

Your loving friend,

JULIA.

I am very sorry the flowers are not so fine as I hoped to get. The winter has been severe for them. Trusting, however, they will arrive in good condition and give you real old-fashioned pleasure, I send them and a heart full of love besides—*real old-fashioned love*.

Litchfield, June 6, '75.

My dear Cora:

Your letter was received on the 4th, together with the exquisite painting of *Arbutus*. I cannot tell you how delighted I am with it. Theo. said, "*Why! that's the same Arbutus you sent to Cora—and the Pigeon-berries too!*" ("Pigeon" was the pet name by which his dear Mama called him during those few weeks.)

The painting stands before me and I love to dwell upon the shading of each blossom, leaf and stem. The buds, too, are perfect. I love it for itself and for the precious sweet words it will say to me every time I look upon it, and for the love I bear the Artist—for Cora. You are a *true* Artist, but I will reserve some of the fine things I see in your future, to talk of when you come. I have been out in the fields and only wish you could have been with me. The wild *Azalias* are ravishing! The delicate pink, with their light green leaves, and the fragrance! Then the graceful *Solomon's Seal*; *Adder's Tongue*, with mottled leaves; *Star-flower*, and fragrant white violet—oh! you should be in the country in the Spring-time and make acquaintance with its flora.

Charley, Kitty, their Mama and Robby Ormiston come up on the 19th inst. Can't you come with them? My Brother Theodore's wife and two little ones will probably be here the week after the others come and I should love to have you see them. The youngest, not yet two years old, is very cunning and sweet.

You speak of coaxing your Father away for awhile. I hope you will coax him up here. We should be *very* happy to see him.

Please let me know if you can come on the 19th and I will tell Charley, that he may be on the look-out for you. They will come on the Norwalk Express, 3:15 p. m., arrive here at 8:15.

You will receive a warm welcome from all at the old farm. With thanks for the painting, and the same old heart full of love as ever, I am,

Yours sincerely,

JULIA M. VAILL.

Best regards to your Father and to the family when you write. My Mother and Sister Abby also wish to be remembered.

The Old Farm, August 18, 1875.

My dear Cora Girl:

Your very welcome letter was received today. I am sorry you did not get your dress the day I sent it. I sent it before noon on Sat., but wondered at your wish to have it sent to the Weekly office, as I suppose it would not be open in the evening, and that if you

were at the St. James you would get it the same evening if directed there. However, I didn't like to go beyond instructions.

It was too bad I didn't send the right key first. I thought it was a queer one, but could not think of anything it could be but that. Some one else looked in the little drawer on Saturday and found the true one. You didn't say whether you wanted the *sack* to the brown dress and then I knew you suffer in it; besides I hadn't a piece of wrapping paper large enough to hold it and the other things. Dr. Ormiston and George Lyman came on Sat. The Doctor left us yesterday, much to our regret. George will remain several days longer, I hope. We look for Sister Em, Charley, Kitty and Albert Richards on Saturday. Mother started for Willimantic on Monday. It makes a large hole in the family to have her gone. We have had plenty of rain and the streams are all overflowed. The sun shines delightful now, and everybody is wishing Cora back again. I hope you will have a charming time at Bellport, and be as happy as you deserve to be, which is a *pretty good wish*. The apples are ripe (the harvest apps) and going off fast, as is the harvest moon. The children have great times with Charades, Teddy has taken to acting—tonight I mean to act hysterics, and some other funny things and we are going to have "Dumb Crambo." Your pony is doing nicely; I love her. Let me know when to meet you. I long to see you, but wouldn't say a word to bring you if you can be happier elsewhere. The young folks are out wading in the puddles as you use to. Teddy will be a pretty sight, but he's happy! Excuse haste and brevity—Dwight is just going in to carry and bring the mail. Remember me to your Father. With a heart full of love, I am,

Yours,

JULIA.

The Old Farm, Dec. 5, 1875.

My dearie "Cora Girl":

I have been thinking I would write you for some time past, but had forgotten your number. Just now came across one of your letters containing it. We have all been to church today and heard an excellent sermon from our new minister, Mr. McLane. It was from 1st Kings, 19:12, "And after the fire, a still small voice." He thought Elijah was a good man, but in his zeal sometimes did wrong as when he slew the 450 prophets of Baal without giving them a moment for repentance. He thought the Lord intended to teach Elijah a lesson of *quiet* doing by the "still small voice." He said we must *have zeal* either in business or religion in order to accomplish anything, it was not *noise* that affected most good but that the patient effort of earnest, thinking people, who live rightly and

seek by every means to lift up and benefit mankind, are the ones who carry out the Christian idea of doing good. He said the spirit of persecution could not please God nor be God-like, and gave some instances in which some of our great Protestant leaders had persecuted even to death those who were equally sincere, but differed from them in matters of faith. Let us be thankful that those days of darkness are passing away.

Sat. p. m., Dec. 11. Theo talked to me so constantly when I was writing before, my discourse had to be postponed and I dare say you think it was quite long enough. If too long, I beg pardon.

Last week we had our "porkers" killed, so nearly all this past week has been occupied in the making of head-cheese, *souse*, mincing for sausages, seasoning, pickling hams, salting down, etc., etc. If you should ever be a housekeeper in the country, you would find it necessary to look after all such things in order to have it properly done. It's fine, too, the best part of housekeeping, because you feel as though you were really accomplishing something that has not to be done over again next week or next month. The pork and lard put up last year are not gone yet and are just as good and sweet as at first, so you see it pays to *know how*.

Teddy is out coasting with the Plummies all day, as Saturday is their holiday. It is great fun for him as he rides down hill with them and then they draw him up. Pretty fair sleighing here for several days past. Oh! my darling, I draw a long breath when I think how much I want to see you and talk with you.

Dec. 12. Just at this point we had a call from the minister, Mr. MacLane. I asked if he didn't find the climate pretty severe, but he said no, although he had spent the past two years in Southern Europe, and seen no snow except when he climbed the Alps. (His wife died in Paris last year and he has a little girl a year younger than Teddy.) It is a lovely day and Mother has taken Theo. to church with Dwight to drive. Theo. goes regularly now to the S. School Infant Class. He is learning to read. Has learned from Ellen the deaf and dumb alphabet and is continually spelling words on his fingers. He likes best to spell the words in his English and French book because that has pictures to help him out, and he spends hours studying the beautiful pictures in the book, "Little Folks," which you brought him.

I haven't seen you since I had my last visit in Brooklyn. I spent three nights with "Little Mac" and we did have a lovely time. There are a good many pleasant ladies in the house. A very desirable place to board I should think. How are you all at 32? Do you go out much, and how do you pass your evenings? Are the gentlemen as irresistibly funny as ever at the table? Tell me all about your artistic labors. I go out but little, finding plenty

to keep me busy and spending the evening mostly in reading aloud. Do not intend to write much in the evenings. We had a company of young folks here to spend the evening a few nights ago and among other entertainments we tried the spelling game that Kitty and Fanny amused themselves with in the summer. We took the word Subordinate to see which could make most words from it in a given time. It was great fun. Some of them did very well, but I came out nearly a hundred counts ahead of any.

If you want an interesting book to read get "Lorna Doone," by Blackmore. We were reading it aloud evenings at Demarest. I have not finished it but am going to get it. Harry says they have and enjoyed it immensely. I have frequent long letters from him. I wrote to Fanny last week. Do you often see them? Please tell my big brother a note from his pen would give much pleasure to the little woman who lives under the Hill. The old farm is a good place to stay at if one has a contented mind, which is my state at present, but without content *no* place is good. I should love to hear from your inner-self, little one. I hope never to lose you out of my heart. Indeed that would hardly be possible with me, for never yet have I ceased to love anyone who was once held dear.

When I had Theo. sit for a picture I sat too, and it has just popped into my head to send you one. I didn't go prepared properly and didn't intend to have the dress taken so much as it is. The picture flatters, of course, or else I wouldn't have it. Theo's haven't come yet. I hear from Sister Abby that she is well and very busy. You remember Mrs. Eva Colvocoresses Jones, upon whom we called, the young Greek lady. She died last month leaving a daughter a month old. It was a great shock to all of us and a terrible blow to her husband. Few things seem sadder than for a Mother to leave so young a child.

Theo. has returned from church and is telling me of all the little girls he saw. He is full of life and fun all the time. He sends a kiss to Cora. Mother sends love. Now I must write to Sister Nealie. Tell me all about yourself and your dearest interests if you feel like it.

Yours as ever,

JULIA.

The Old Farm, Litchfield, January 7, 1876.

My dear Cora:

The other day our neighbor, Mr. Plumb, found the lovely book you sent to Teddy, still lying in the Express Office as we had not sent there since Christmas. He is greatly delighted with it and "chatters" more than ever about the pictures he finds in it and



Julia M. Vaill
And three little maids whom she loved



Cora Smith (Mrs. Gould)



Niece Katherine (Mrs. Howard)
Daughter of Charles Vaill



Niece Mary (Mrs. Talcott)
Daughter of Theodore Vaill

everything else. He is learning to spell quite fast and it would astonish you to hear him play the Rhyming game. He took it up himself; finds his words and keeps one in his mind for me to match. The other morning he told me, before light, to give him a word to rhyme with 'plot.' I went all through the alphabet, giving the definitions just as the grown-up children do. "Is it a noun?" "Yes," finally—"Is it what we make in the end of thread when we sew?" "Yes, it is a knot!" he said.

He has enough Christmas presents for several little boys. Among them a huge Noah's Ark, with nearly 300 animals in pairs from Elephants to the Kangaroo, from the Rhinoceros to the Grasshopper. They are all set up in order on a table devoted to their use. Then he had from his Papa a number of nice presents, besides a fine large sled, and some books. He can slide down the hill *alone*, too! Isn't that coming on well for 4-2-3s? He was so pleased with the stocking St. Nicholas filled for him that he wants me to write a letter and thank him and the first time we "burn out" a chimney send it up in the flame. You will think my mind is all taken up with the wonderful nephew, and it wouldn't be far from true. He is pretty much all we have in Winter to keep us sweet and bright. Just now he is lying on his back poring over a newspaper.

Sabbath evening. My Darling. I left off to go and take a walk with my little man, then in the evening to Library meeting and so the days go by. We have all been to church and S. S. Heard a most excellent discourse from the words "Pray without ceasing," from our Mr. McLane. It did me good and I needed it. The subject is one that has been in my mind much of late and my thoughts have gone back many times to the revered ancestors, who for three generations believed in, and prayed to God, from under this old roof-tree and although I am not a "Spiritualist" in the common acceptance, I feel confident that the spirits of our departed loved ones are often near us and do help us. It seems as though they guarded us from danger, at all events I love to think so.

Did you get a letter from me the middle of December? I received a precious note from Whittier the other day in which he says—"If I can compile another volume (of Child Life) it will be partly for the sake of thy little man and thy request." Ah! the Quaker Poet give me! It doesn't take whole volumes for him to express a thought. He always strikes when the iron is hot and when he gets through he *stops*. Get your Father to read you some of these evenings the two short poems—"The Eternal Goodness" and "Our Master." They will bear reading many times and I know you will both subscribe to every line.

I said to Teddy before light: "Whom do you think I had a letter from last night? Somebody we both love." "Aunt Abby?" "No." "Papa?" "No." "Cora?" "No." "Uncle Abe?" "No." "Someone whose *writings* you love." "Hans Anderson?" "No, a *Poet*." Then he whispered, "J. G. Whittier?" (for he loves him best of the Poets because he compiled the two volumes of *Child Life*). "Yes! and perhaps he'll make us another book!" Such delight as he manifested I never saw, you would have thought a whole "school of porpoises" were leaping about the bed and he kept it up for about five minutes. Then raced off to Grandma's room to tell her and she said he supplemented the news by a good many most uncommon jumps. I never saw a child of his age that loved books so much (in the *Winter*;) in the summer he is busy with nature and *dirt*.

Tell me when you write what news you have from your dear ones abroad. Do you often see my good Bro. Mr. Smith and family? How is Art? I long to hold communion with you.

Morpheus has deserted me the two past nights, so now I must take my pillow and go after him—Sleep! Sleep! "Blest be the man that first invented sleep," so Sancho Panza said and so say I.

Your sleepy-headed lover,

JULIA.

The Old Farm, Litchfield, February 24, 1876.

My darling:

That implies a great deal I know—but it is always the feeling that lives in my thoughts, for ever since that summer-time when first you crept into my heart as a child—

"I have you fast in my fortress,
And will not let you depart,
But put you down into the dungeons
In the round tower of my heart,
And there I will keep you forever,
Yes, forever and a day,
'Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,
And moulder in dust away."

I was more than glad to get your long letter, and you must never think your affairs, either *de coeur* or others, are not of interest to me. My impulse was to write you at once, but on second thoughts I knew it wasn't best. What you write concerning Mr. K. gave me great relief, for from all you have told me of him, I felt sure he was a selfish man, and unworthy of you. When a man is "in love," he naturally acts out the *best there is in him*

toward the object he wishes to gain. If at such a time, a man consults his own ease and wishes, rather than those of his love, let her beware how she becomes entangled. I have in mind now, several of the worthiest women on earth, who, years ago, sacrificed themselves to just such *selfish* men, and their life was one heavy burden, two of them sunk in their graves without a ray of sympathy from their most correct and exemplary husbands, glad to get out of the world and away from such coldness. The other two will soon go the same way, and glad to go. Not one of those men have any vices, nothing but selfishness, which I sometimes think is the sum of all vices. When you see a man uniformly kind, and considerate and willing to sacrifice his own comfort for his Mother or sisters, or if he has none, the same way with the poor and helpless, we may feel tolerably sure he will make a good husband (although he may not accumulate property so fast as some of the selfish ones). Another thing that besets a young woman who appears to be wealthy, is the *fortune* hunter. You may laugh, my dear, but I know of *so many* who thought they married for love, but it was partly because they hoped she would have a few thousands they could *in some* way control, and to make life a little easier, and when they found, as they generally do that their expenses were increased and not the income, what they fancied was *love* collapses and they must live on husks or perish. I had no thought of writing any of this when I began but like the epitaph Joe Gargery wrote for his Father's tombstone, "It seemed to come to me!" You are young yet and have plenty of time before you—I pray God you may not make a fatal mistake. Among all my near friends the marriages have been singularly happy, but not one among them has been married young and all were thoroughly acquainted during long engagements. You will think me in a sombre mood for all this homily, but my dear one, there is no one among those I dearly love for whom I have the solicitude I feel just now for you. For I know your loving nature, and that life would be bitter indeed to you if you were to settle down upon a lower order of love than your own.

I have just written Fanny all about Theo's and my visit of ten days to Washington, the Dramatics, etc., so as you can hear it from her, will not repeat. We made the acquaintance of three Chinese girls and two young men. Theo fell in love with little Amy Laisun. We found all well on return except the dear old trees. They looked pretty sick. An ice-storm has broken some of them badly and their limbs strew the grounds. Dwight has drawn up several loads. When the kindly leaves come out it will cover the loss I hope. I have taken my first cold of the season and it has deprived me of speech for four days. At last I have succeeded in driving

the silence out of my throat. If there is any silence *needed* anywhere I trust it will go to the right place.

Frank Bissell is married to Miss Macdonald!!! Not, I am happy to say, to our dear "little Mac."

We had great fun at a spelling match here between about 60—I was spelled down once, then spelled the whole lot down twice, and had no preparation as I didn't know what they would spell from. They put such words to me as ricochet, blanc mange, Esquimaux, gneiss, caoutchouc, etc., etc.

Friday morning. Mr. P. is going so I will not finish this time. I am looking for birthday letters on Monday.

Your most loving

JULIA.

Litchfield, Conn.

My dear Cora:

As the enclosed letters belong to you and not to me I send them on, not because they have any value at this late day. Did you receive one from your Father which I forwarded a month ago? We should like to hear from you, for we have not forgotten to love you as of old, and do you know, dear friend, a *true, disinterested* love is worth having—it hardly matters from whom. Please remember me kindly to all the family, and believe me

As ever yours

JULIA V.

The Old Farm, Thursday evening.

My darling:

Yours is received. When I said "A letter from Cora!" the young folks set up a shout and gathered around to hear it. They all speak of missing you and I know they do, for every one in the house loves you—but I am selfish enough to think that none of them love so *hard* as I do, few perhaps have thought so much about it, especially in regard to your dear self, for they haven't known you so long.

I readily found the silk waist, which I send by Ex., also the piano key was in your work basket, and so I send it thinking you may like to play some, especially if some of your dear friends should be in to see you. You arrived at the St. James before I reached home yesterday, for before the Blacksmith had served me it began to rain, but I came at last all right and in the p. m. the floods descended again—but we had a jolly time. You should have heard the shouts of laughter—perhaps you did? My Sister, Mrs. Robinson and Allie came to-day. Brother Charlie was obliged to leave



Julia in her "teens"

in another direction. He will perhaps come up next week. Sister Nealie and Robin were also here to-day. This eve we have been *Charading*. Fanny Smith, Robby Ormiston and Allie Rob, acted Plant-a-shun. I wish you had been here to see. They acted capitally. Fanny didn't laugh once, and Sister Clara and several others said, "How much she looks like her Father!" (having on a hat and cloak and mustache). The boys were blacked and regular little Sambos—standing on their heads and dancing double-shuffles every time their Massa's back was turned. I had Dwight exercise your pony to-day as I couldn't well go, but I shall hope to drive her to-morrow. It is raining again this eve, and I shouldn't wonder if the dust would get laid. * * * I have been thinking about those we both love—and so you know about how my thought runs. Ah! what a barren world this would be if we couldn't love each other! I'd sell out and move away to some other place—I ought to stop but don't want to. "Little Mac" says "put in my love!" I've had a good visit with her to-day and yesterday. Isn't she sweet! I hope you will have the best of good times, my dearie—and come back feeling well. Please tell your Father I am very glad he didn't have to lose his bet of \$500,000 that you would leave something, but at the same time I am sorry that you have been inconvenienced. Be sure to let me know when you are coming that I may meet you at the Station if possible—Remember me to your Father very kindly and believe me as ever,

Your dearly loving

JULIA.

Following are some extracts from letters written by FRANCIS S. SMITH to his daughter, much to the edification of herself and the friends whom she was visiting at Litchfield, Conn.:

STREET & SMITH, Publishing House,
No. 55 Fulton Street,
New York.

FRANCIS S. STREET,
FRANCIS S. SMITH.

Office of The New York Weekly (Circulation 230,000),
The Illustrated Literary Album,
The Phunny Phellow.

My darling Cora:

N. Y., June 24, 1869.

I cannot tell you how much pleased I was to receive your letter and to read that you are well and enjoying yourself. * * *

So you have been fishing, have you? I suppose that because you have conquered Mr. Vaill at croquet, you think you can beat him at fishing also, but I fear that you will find the last-named task an up-hill business. If you learn to fish as well as you have learned to play croquet, I will have to set you up in business when you return home. I think I can buy a horse good enough for about fifty cents, and a wagon to match it for about the same money. So if you can procure a tin horn anywhere, and practice "tooting" on it, so you will be perfected on it when you reach home * * *

My dear Cora:

New York, August 4, 1870.

I hope you are getting along well, and I feel quite certain that you are. You could not well do otherwise in such good hands. I have no doubt that the boys at least are getting along *swimmingly* every other day. And now, my darling, while I think of it, let me speak of something that is on my mind. To use the words of my "Uncle William" in his great play of "Hamlet," "If ever thou didst thy dear father love, avenge his most foul and deliberate—" defeat at croquet, at the hands of the fiendess, Mrs. Barton. You know you are champion, and I wish her to understand that although I cannot play much myself, I have a daughter who can. "A dwarf may have a giant for his friend, and so be master of a giant's strength."

All of you be just as good as you can be: be gentle, kind, affectionate and forbearing one to the other, for there is nothing in all this world so beautiful as harmony in families. "The kingdom of heaven is within you," if you will cultivate it. Do it. "So shall your ways be ways of pleasantness and all your paths be peace," and you will make your old Father supremely happy. Stay as long as it will do you good to stay—not depriving yourself of any pleasure which you greatly desire.

And now, my dear ones, I must say good-bye for the present, and may the protection of that dear Father, Whom I revere in my heart of hearts, encompass you all around, and return you to me safe, healthy and happy.

Your devoted father,

FRANCIS S. SMITH.

"I was sorry to learn you had had such bad luck at fishing, but don't give it up. Procure a copy of Isaac Walton on Piscatorial Sports, and get Mr. Vaill to give you a few lessons in luring the finny tribe, for I have set my heart on your becoming a first-class peddler. I saw a horse and wagon in front of my office the other day, which I think would just about suit, and I wouldn't at all

regret laying out a dollar for them. You see I am not at all stingy!

I don't approve of the strawberry business at all. It isn't half aristocratic enough. If you can't go into the fish trade, I think you had better procure a bag and hook, and go into the rag-picking profession. That is a nice, light, genteel business, besides being very lucrative. Why, there are at least half a dozen of our best families whose progenitors laid the foundations of their immense fortunes in that line. You are young, enterprising and ambitious, and would certainly succeed as a 'raggist.' Only think, after making a million or so, you could cut the trade and set up a splendid establishment. Your coat-of-arms might be a hand-cart with two yellow dogs harnessed and couchant thereunder, surmounted by a bag and hook crossed. Think of this, and don't disappoint me utterly. Fish or rags it must be. Nothing else will suit me
* * *

"Your last letter reached me safely, and gave me much pleasure. You are improving wonderfully in epistolary productions, and will one day make a first-class letter-writer.

I am afraid after all I shall have to come down a peg in my lofty views concerning your future. I don't think you have the genius for either a 'raggist' or a 'fishist'; and taking this view of the matter, the bright idea strikes me that you may become a common scribe; not a writer of law documents, perhaps, but a miserable authoress. What a humiliating reflection! Alas, that I should have hoped so much from you, and come to this 'lame and impotent conclusion' at last! But we may have the dollar horse-and-wagon yet; or if that fails, I think I shall buy you a pony to ride, and you must try and make that answer.

Your Mamma is still enjoying excellent health, and so are your brothers, who are all with us at present. We have a beautiful home in Orange for the summer months, situated on the very apex of a ridge near Montrose Station, where the air is pure and balmy, and the birds make such music as to enrapture one with life. * * *

Enclosed I send you the poem, 'How a heart was lost,' which I wrote when with you last.

Pray be careful of yourself, my pet. Your Father's heart-strings are bound around you, and should ill befall you, they would snap.
* * *

"I received and read your letter with very much pleasure,—all except that portion of it which breathed of hay fever. Confound that hay fever! I do think the nose should have been treated better than any other feature of the human face-divine, because it is the very centre (scenter) of our beauty, and because it is so plain on the face of things; but it has worse treatment than all the rest put

together. I have very little sympathy for one of those turn-up fellows, nor do I like one of those sharp-pointed fellows that show a disposition to dip into other people's affairs. In fact, I can't say that I am partial to a hump-backed nose. But such noses as yours and mine should be let severely alone. But the Lord knows this is enough about noses!

I hope you will succeed with your theatre; and their High Mightiness—the Baron and Baroness of Bowronsville—bespeak two reserved seats (orchestra stalls) in advance. Tell the famous tragedian, George C. Smith, not to put too much lead in the seat of his trousers when he dresses for his part. Hint to the low comedian, Ormond G. Smith, that dirt is not absolutely necessary in the make-up of a gentleman's valet; and advise the heavy man, Charles Vaill, to keep a bright look-out for bumble-bees: the sting of criticism does not amount to much in the long run, but the sting of a bumble-bee is most intolerable, and not to be endured, and Charles nose it.

I think your picture is splendid, and I thank you for sending it to me. When I first opened your letter I did not know it was from you, and when the picture dropped out I was wondering which of our young lady contributors had been sending me her picture—for you know I receive such favors frequently."

* * *

"Your mother and myself came up from Long Branch this morning on a flying visit, and shall return again on the afternoon boat. I have very little to write about except the follies and frivolities of fashionable life, and that you know is distasteful to me. The visitors at Long Branch are made up principally of dandies with their hair parted in the middle, and gushing damsels with their hair done up in a bag at the back of their heads; and both are decidedly more ornamental than useful. To give you an idea of the immensity of brain possessed by the latter class, I will mention the fact that a few evenings since during a brilliant display of the 'Aurora Borealis,' a pudding-headed youth, whose clothes fitted him altogether too little, approached a gusher and exclaimed—"Oh, Miss Florence, do come and look at the "rora."'" "What's the "rora?"'" asked the damsel. "Oh, the light in the sky," was the rejoinder—"they call it a "rora," you know, but I'm sure I don't know why!" and away they went to look at the 'rora.' And yet these two young persons were dressed in the height of fashion, and belonged without doubt to the 'Upper Ten.' What I have witnessed while sojourning at Long Branch has set me moralizing, and the result is the enclosed poem—"A Few Thoughts"—which you may have the privilege of reading before it goes out to the world:



*Yours truly,
Francis S. Smith.*

"A FEW THOUGHTS"

"I think a disposition that is happy and resigned
Adds greatly to the comfort and the health of human kind.
I think a sour temper and a bosom filled with spite
Brings trouble, and puts every sign of happiness to flight.
I think no individual, however high his station,
E'er gained the praise of worthy men by vice and dissipation.
I think no dainty dandy, while for ladies' favors suing,
E'er added perfume to his breath by smoking or by chewing.
I think that wicked cunning never met with much success.
I think if swindlers suffered more, their number would be less.
I think if meddling gossips would cease to spy and talk,
That lawyers would be fewer, and courts would have less work.
I think that many doctors would better blacksmiths make.
I think that clerks who gamble have more than gold at stake.
I think a man who marries, if he gets a proper mate,
Secures a fortune, though his bride may own no real estate.
I think if certain folks would let some other folks alone,
They'd find more leisure to attend to business of their own.
I think when stingy rich men chance from fortune's height to
tumble,
And meet with little sympathy, they have no right to grumble.
I think that many ministers, renowned for fluent speech,
Would more consistent be, if they'd practice what they preach.
I think that true religion, when the tempter tries his art,
Throws a shield of triple power around the wavering heart.
I think that every soul that sins will meet with suffering,
Whether that soul belongs to a peasant or a king.
I think all grades of people, from the monarch to the slave,
Are fashioned from one common clay, and equal in the grave."

WHAT ROBIN SAID

Written at Litchfield

O'erburdened with sadness, despondent and weary,
I sought the cool shade of an old maple tree;
And I said, as I seated myself, "Oh, how dreary,
How vapid, how dull, is this great world to me!"
Just then a blithe robin, with downy breast glowing,
Broke into a song from his perch on a bough,
And I cried, "Oh, sweet robin, with joy overflowing,
What would I not give to be happy as thou!"

He ceased his glad warbling, and looked down upon me
As though he were gifted with wisdom profound—
The sly minstrel knew that his music had won me,
And feared not to jump from his perch on the ground.
Then he hopped to my feet, and he cunningly eyed me,
And gave a sly wink and a twist of his head,
As though, while he trusted me not, he defied me,
And this, in his bird talk, is what Robin said.

“You envy, poor grumbler, my lot and condition,
Because you are troubled by worldly affairs.
How simple you are! How short-sighted your vision!
Do you think that a bird has no sorrows or cares?
My mate and myself only last week were sleeping
One night, with our brood, in a snug little nest,
When a hurricane fierce through the tree-tops came sweeping,
And ruthlessly tore the dear ones from my breast.

“But God sent the storm that produced this disaster,
And although it filled me with sorrow and pain,
I knew that it came from a merciful Master,
And I tried to forget it and warble again.
And even in winter, when hunger assails me,
And frost chills my frame, I endeavor to sing;
I am thankful for life, and the hope never fails me
That comfort and joy will return with the spring.

“The truth is, my friend, when you sit down and grumble,
And take of this life such a cynical view,
Instead of invoking a spirit that’s humble,
It is not the world that’s to blame—it is you.
All are subject *alike* to both blessings and crosses;
So cease your mad race after power and pelf;
Be thankful for gains, and resigned under losses,
And you’ll find that most troubles are made by yourself.”

Thus spoke little Robin in bird language plainly,
And pluming his wings, he returned to the trees,
And I know that he thought that he had not spoken vainly,
From his satisfied air as he looked down at me.
And, indeed, I’ll confess, as I thought the thing over,
When garrulous Robin had taken his flight,
That I in his lesson no fault could discover.
And that his deductions were certainly right.



The Young Poet G. C. S.

From "The Winsted Herald," eighteen hundred and sixty-eight.

"Just so long as this fierce, fiery, broiling temperature continues, we shall make up our newspaper the easiest way we can, and we don't believe there is a single patron of the Herald so hard-hearted as to blame us for it. The Herald readers are not such a mean class of people as all that. Here, now, are a couple of "poems," written by two excessively youthful Brooklyn gentlemen, who are summering in Litchfield. We should hardly think it worth while at any other season of the year to print them, but in view of the elevated mercury they must go in. They will help to fill a column as well as something more ponderous. They were prize poems, inspired by an offer of twenty-five cents for the worst one:

A TRYING FAMILY

by

George Campbell Smith.

Oh! I do feel so happy
All through these summer days,
I'll go and gather holly,
What else I will not say.

I know I'm very lazy,
And father works so long
I think I ought to help him;
I'll do it with a song.

Oh! it is very dreary;
The ice is all around,
And mother now is weeping,
For father is in the ground.

Mother, what shall we do?
We have nothing now to eat,
And you won't live, dear mother,
For it's all sun and heat.

Mother, I've got to go;
I thought so yesterday,
And you are not afraid
That I should go away.

He put his hand upon his breast;
"I'm going, Ma," he said;
She kissed him, and he said "Good-bye!"
He died upon his bed.

The above was published in the Winsted Herald about eighteen hundred and sixty-eight by Theodore F. Vaill, whose apologies and cynicisms, though quite justifiable, were not fraught with prescience, for I doubt that any matter in that particular issue of his publication, if it has survived oblivion, has ever been so treasured and enjoyed as these rare bits of poesy. On special occasions, such as family reunions on Christmas, Thanksgiving and other holidays, their proud custodian would bring them forth to shine in their pristine glory for the edification of the company.

"A Trying Family" set the audience in shrieks of laughter, even when the offspring of the perpetrator were too young to be critics of their father's effusions, yet they felt the humor of the occasion and made such a din amidst the general jollification that the reader was not permitted to progress except by fits and starts, while the laughter drowned all pathos suggested by the lines. Even the untimely end of the hero as "He died upon his bed" failed to cast the proper gloom, in fact, at this climax the listeners were generally so weak from laughter that they could not but be thankful for the sudden demise; however, there must have been some subtleties in "A Trying Family" beyond the ken of ordinary minds, for the initiated ones who instinctively scent genius amidst their own preserves (I refer to

Messrs. Vaill and Smith, sr.) both concluded that way down deep in the brain of the young poet there must be a spark which set "The Trying Family" in motion, inconsistent and contradictory as the action of the verses may seem to a layman. Far be it from me to criticise the judgment of my elders or question the talent of the prize winner, who added this gem to the archives of Smith family lore. As a self-appointed critic I note, however, that in the third verse, severe cold has laid the father of the improvised family low, while in the verse following, extreme heat is about to treat the mother in the same manner. It looks as though the spirit of the elements had decided to exterminate the family as quickly as possible, while in the last two verses, the material manner in which the sun shuffles off his mortal coil is unique. It appears that he calmly decided upon his departure the day previous as to the actual consummation of the same, giving the impression that he had studied a map, purchased a ticket and decided upon his bed as a medium of rapid transit. Mr. Vaill's lofty reflections in his editorial on these chef d'oeuvres have lost their sting. It was quite "worth while" at any "season of the year," whether "the mercury" was up or down, as far as my present judgment is concerned, but for his condescension let us be duly thankful. Cast bread upon the waters and back it comes after many years. These little lines have gathered value with age until they have become precious heirlooms linking our present sobered lives, affluent and bright as they may be, with that little green spot way yonder where we basked in the sunshine of youth and fanciful dreams.

Following is the second "poem" referred to by Editor of Winsted Herald:

A RIDE TO BANTAM LAKE

by

"Charley Vaill."

'Tis a beautiful morn in the month of May,
And everything shows 'tis a very fine day.
Miss Vaill is a-hurrying to put up the cake,
For in a few minutes we go to the Lake.

"Hark, here comes the wagon,
Kitty, open the gate.
I knew Mr. Foster
Wouldn't be a bit late."

Frank and Ormy the driver on the front seat.
"Cora, put up the umbrella to keep off the heat.
Now driver, all ready, just see how we fly.
Turn round to the house and call 'Mamie, good-bye.' "

"Miss Vaill. Oh! where is Freddy?
And what will he come on?"
"There wasn't room for him in here;
He'll come along on Don."

And now again we have reached home.
Our pleasures have received no stain.
We wish no more today to roam,
Because it has begun to rain.

"The Drunkard's Dream," by Ormond G. Smith, which also figured in the competition, I regret to say, came to an untimely end. Lost, strayed or stolen; Despite my vigilant eye! It certainly looks suspicious to me, especially if the judges concluded that in their united and unbiased opinion, it was outclassed by "A Trying Family." Perhaps, after all, it was asking too much clemency on the part of the "readers," although I cannot help wishing that Mr. Vaill had been less con-

siderate for them or we might now be revelling in the thrills that the title suggests. There is a missing note in the annals of the Smith family, where the prophet is *not* without honor, when a proud sister keeps the records.

FACTS CONCERNING "THE VAILL HOMESTEAD"

Not colored by my imagination, but quoted from historic records.

THE Vaill Homestead, situated by about two miles from the center, is the oldest house in the township. It was built in 1744 by Captain Joseph Vaill on land which was described in the deed as "Wolf-Pit Hill." This land belonged to Mr. William Peck, one of the original settlers of the town, was deeded as a wedding gift to his daughter, who married Captain Joseph Vaill. The latter had formerly lived at Southold, L. I. The construction of the "Wolf-Pit," which was in active operation prior to the building of the home for this intrepid young married pair, was simple but effective; an excavation in the ground was surmounted by heavy logs, so arranged that they would fall upon and crush a wolf when he tugged at the "bait" fastened to a figure 4 trap underneath. Bounties were paid for the destruction of wolves, snakes, etc. On the sixteenth of May, 1740, it was voted "that whosoever shall kill and destroy any rattle snakes within the bounds of the town anytime before the tenth day of December next, bringing the tayle and som of the flesh to any of the electmen of the town shall have three pence for each snake."

The original design of the Homestead was the well-known "lean-to" of that period. At a later date the longer roof was cut off, leaving the two roofs of equal length. The stairway in the main portion is about five feet in width, and rises under an arch formed by union of the two brick chimneys in the north and south rooms. It is probable that a large stone chimney originally occupied the space of the present stairway, and that the present brick chimneys and the broad straight stairway were subsequent improvements. In 1853 the old stone chimney and its no-longer-required huge oven were removed and later other changes and additions were made, bringing the appearance of the house as it is today.

The second owner of the Homestead was Benjamin Vaill, who lived there for eighty years, until his death in 1852.

It was next in the possession of the Rev. Herman Landon Vaill, born under its roof, eldest son of Benjamin; served in the War of 1812. Later he taught school in Goshen Academy, when John

Brown, of Harper's Ferry fame, was one of his pupils. He also taught in Georgia and Cornwall; studied at Andover Theological Seminary and Yale Divinity School and received the honorary degree of Master of Arts from Yale in 1824. He was ordained as a Congregational minister and had pastorates at East Haddam, East Lynne, Torrington, Seneca Falls, N. Y., and Milton (1849-1857), finally retiring and living the last thirteen years of his life in the old Homestead at Litchfield. He married Flora Gold, descendant of Nathan Gold, one of the nineteen petitioners named in the Charter of Connecticut, dated April 12, in the fourteenth year of the reign of Charles the Second. In 1870 the property came into his possession by right of inheritance.

Among the descendants of Capt. Joseph Vaill was Doctor Charles Vaill, of Rochester, N. Y., a wit whose sparkling humor is said to have done his patients more good than his prescriptions. In reference to the fact that the Litchfield branch of the Vaill adheres to the two "l's" in the spelling of the name, he was once asked why he didn't drop one of the l's, he said he "didn't know which one to drop."

Theodore F. Vaill, another descendant of Captain Joseph, and son of Herman Landon Vaill, was Adjutant and Historian of the Second Connecticut Volunteer Heavy Artillery in the Civil War, originally the Nineteenth Connecticut Volunteers. Theodore F. Vaill was mustered out August 18, 1865, wounded at Fort Fisher when Lieutenant, flesh wound in left hip by cast-iron ball from spherical case shot. He was editor of the Winsted Herald from 1863 to 1875. Author of the "Aeneid in Modern American," a humorous translation of the first and fourth books of Virgil's Aeneid.

Joseph H. Vaill, the present owner, entered the Civil War in September 27, 1861; transferred to invalid corps on May 18, 1864. Editor of The Winsted Herald, and Connecticut Representative as Executive Officer of the Columbian Exposition in 1893. The Atlanta Exposition of 1895 and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904.

Joseph H. Vaill, brother of Theodore, was the last direct descendant of the Homestead. In reference to this gentleman, who passed away a few months prior to my visit, I take the liberty of quoting the following from the Litchfield Inquirer of April 1, 1915:

"Litchfield Inquirer, April 1, 1915. On Saturday afternoon of last week, in Litchfield's old cemetery, near the boyhood scenes he knew and loved so well, and next to many of his comrades of the days gone by, relatives and friends from far and near gathered to pay the last tribute of affectionate regard for Joseph Herman Vaill, 'Our Joe,' as Litchfield always has and always will be proud to call him. Mr. Vaill's earlier life

was passed at Litchfield and he was almost the only one left of those who studied at the little red school house on Harris Plains; afterwards he studied at the Gunnery School at Washington, Conn., and enlisted for the war, September 17, 1861. He was in Company E, Eighth Regiment, C. V. I., and was promoted May 18, 1862, as quartermaster Sergeant of the regiment. In February, 1864, he was transferred to the 159th Company, Second Battalion, V. R. C., as first sergeant.

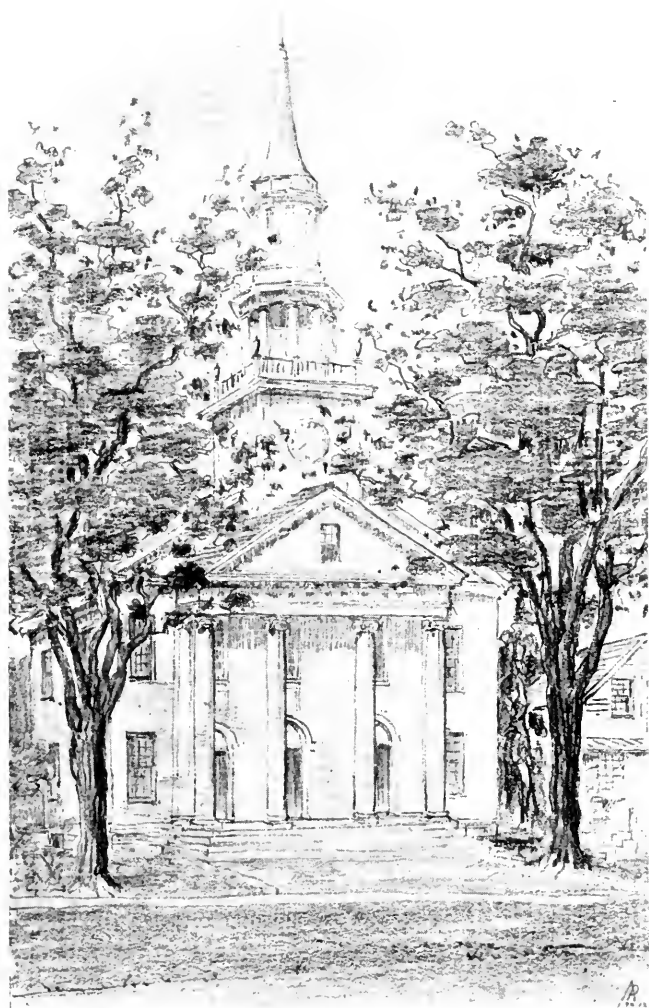
He took the management of the *Winsted Herald* when his brother Theodore died in 1875, and edited the paper for sixteen years. As a newspaper man 'Joe' Vaill was beloved and respected by the fraternity of the State; was one of the most popular men in Connecticut, genial, kind-hearted and witty. He was one of the Charter members of the Connecticut Editorial Association, was chosen by the Connecticut Board of Management as Executive Secretary of the Chicago Exposition in 1893. Also served in that capacity at the St. Louis Exposition. His wonderful tact and gift of adaptability, as well as his executive force soon made him the Dean among the State Secretaries. Aside from his newspaper work Mr. Vaill wrote Connecticut at the Columbian Exposition, 1893, and Connecticut at St. Louis, 1904. He also compiled a history of the Litchfield County Choral Union.

He was one of the sweetest and most lovable of men, yet his principles were as firm and solid as the granite cliffs of his native hills. He was a New Englander of the best and highest type, with all the wit as well as the wisdom that have made the men from this section world builders. He was ever doing for others, with never a thought for himself (like Julia)."

A tribute from his friend, R. S. Hulbert, printed in the *Winsted Citizen*:

"I have known Joseph H. Vaill from the long years since the early 80's; far-seeing, versatile, of literary ability, adept, able, but above all a true friend. I will add but one more tribute—Brave men face death, unafraid in the tumult of battle and crouching beside each other in trenches, but many of them would fail where Mr. Vaill endured cheerfully, even with a pathetic humor, after he was stricken to the end. Mr. Vaill left a wife, who was Cornelia Smith, of Litchfield; two sons, Robinson and Theodore, and one sister, Mrs. Charles Robinson, of Pelham Manor."

In conclusion, relative to the above taken from the *Litchfield Inquirer*, may I add a few lines that were sent to me and my brothers



Old Congregational Church

when we lost our Comrade and Father: "He has left a record behind him worth more to his children than the greatest wealth."

A SIMPLE TRIBUTE

to

JULIA M. VAILL.

From the Litchfield Inquirer, September 12, 1912:

"Miss Julia M. Vaill, daughter of the late Herman Landon Vaill and Flora Gold Vaill, died at Stamford, August 27, 1912. Miss Vaill was a woman of rare charm. Both in conversation and in her writings she invariably showed the keenest wit, and, furthermore, endeared herself to her many friends by her genuine interest in people of all classes." May I add, the most unselfish character I have ever met and the embodiment of all Christian graces.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN LITCHFIELD

(A little data now and then is relished by the "Dinna Ken")

There have been to date four Congregational Churches built in Litchfield. The Pioneers of the town brought with them from Lebanon the Rev. Timothy Collins and at the first town meet of which there is any record, November 16, 1721, he was called to a settlement in the place in the work of ministry. He was ordained as pastor July 19, 1723, and occupied the same pulpit for twenty-nine years. Next followed Rev. Judah Champion, graduate of Yale, ordained July 4, 1753. The town then voted to build a new meeting house, which was completed in 1762. Captain Joseph Vaill was one of the committee to sign for this new edifice. It was erected on the Green near the site of the first one, 63 feet long, 42 feet wide, with a steeple and

bell. Mr. Champion's successor was the Rev. Daniel Huntington, ordained in 1798. Rev. Lyman Beecher was installed in this second church in 1810, where he preached for seventeen years and was succeeded by Rev. Daniel L. Carroll in 1827. Then once again the church society voted to erect a new church edifice, marking the third house of worship on the same site on the Green and completed 1829 (the one I attended). The Rev. Laurens P. Hickok was installed as pastor July 5, 1829. Then came a change of location and the fourth structure was completed and occupied in 1873.

TO A FRINGED GENTIAN

by

*Theodore Bissell Vaill.

Little Gentian, you are fair,
With your wondrous hood of blue,
Exquisite your dainty fringe,
Surely God has favored you!
When my Lady strolls with me
Through country lanes so fair,
Now and then we spy your head,
And we cry out "Oh, how rare!"
Little Gentian, do you know,
Just how rare you really seem,
How you hold us by your charm,
Held—enthralled—as in a dream.
None can find you in the Spring,
In the Summer, too, you hide;
But when Autumn comes along
Oft time by some charmed road-side,
Sly, your head peeps through the grass,
From your little wayside bower,
While we passers-by exclaim
"Little Gentian, rarest Flower!"

*Who explained to me that "Aunt Julia's" love of this flower inspired him to write these lines, which I think beautiful.

SWEET MEMORIES

by

Francis S. Smith

A poetical version of a prose review of Litchfield by his daughter.

When winter hurls her bitter sleet
Across the unprotected moor,
The traveller with hasty feet
Speeds on toward his cabin door;
But though the sharp-fanged nipping air
May crust his beard with icy rime,
It cannot from his memory tear
The sweet delights of summer-time.

So every memory born of joy
Will live as long as life shall last;
No changes can the charm destroy—
'Tis proof 'gainst every arrow cast,
A backward view recalls the hours
That once our youthful pulses thrill'd,
As aromatic summer flowers
Live in the scents from them distill'd.

The memory of a childhood pass'd
Beneath a gentle mother's sway,
With love's sweet mantle o'er it cast,
Can never wholly pass away.
Whatever adult fate we earn,
Whate'er the censure or the praise—
Still will the fond heart sometimes turn
Back to those careless, happy days.

Then let us, as we journey on,
Endeavor some sad heart to cheer—
'Twill be an act to think upon
When ending our probation here—
A joy to know that after death
Has set the restless spirit free,
There still lives in our mortal breath
Some fondly cherish'd memory.

IF a house could talk gold mines would suffer in interest by comparison. The Litterateur would be enriched in such outpouring of comedies and tragedies that even Shakespeare might be outrivalled and this bit of narrative be quite extinguished by a very antiquated, a very historical, a very well-bred old house, whose voice, mellowed by age and softened by contact with the wisdom and purity of the dwellers therein, I can easily imagine at this *finis*, offering a benediction on the head of one of the least of its devotees, who still lives to *remember* and for the dearly beloved that have been called to another Home, I hear it chant.

“Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine”
Give them eternal rest, O Lord!

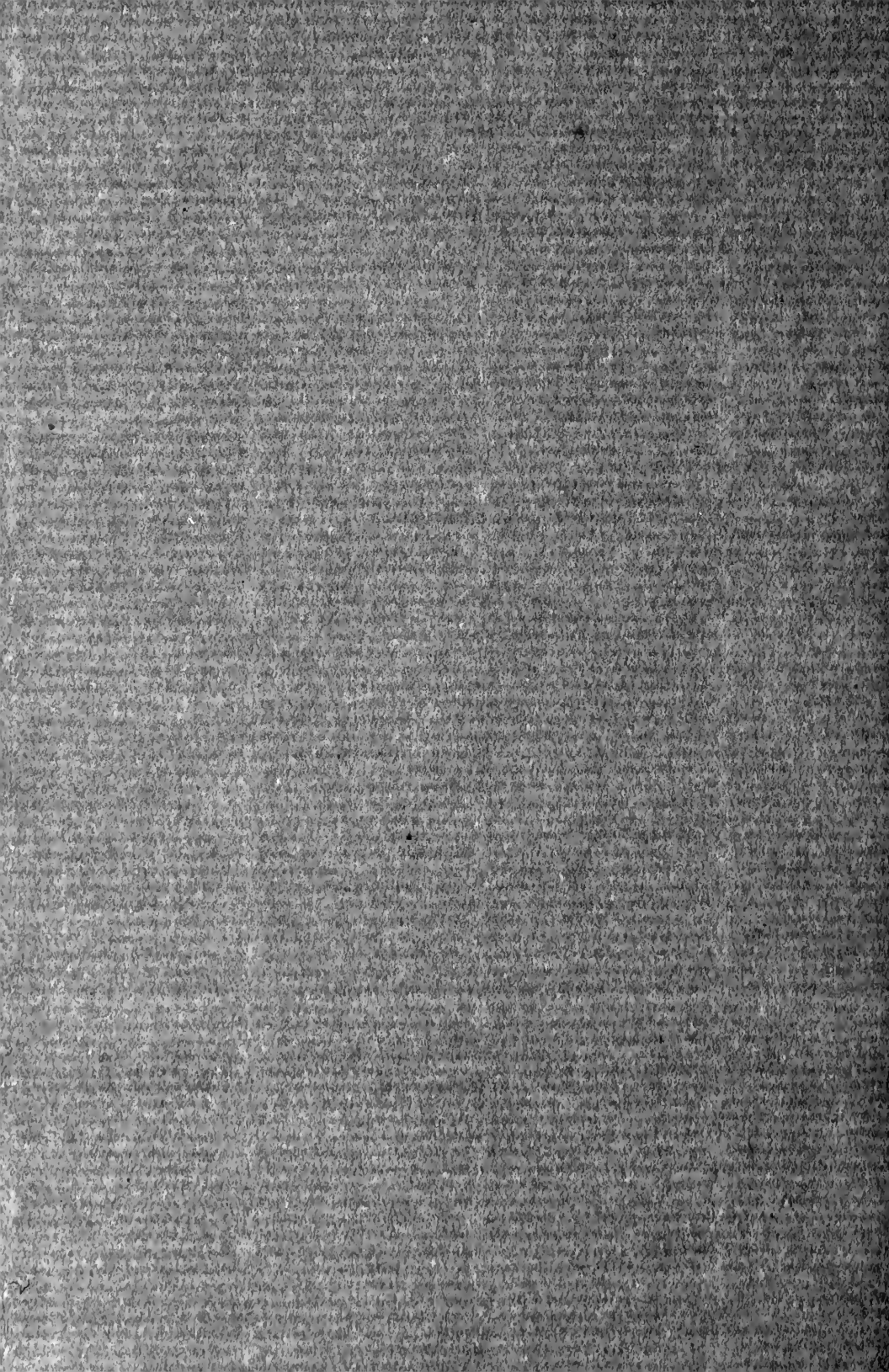
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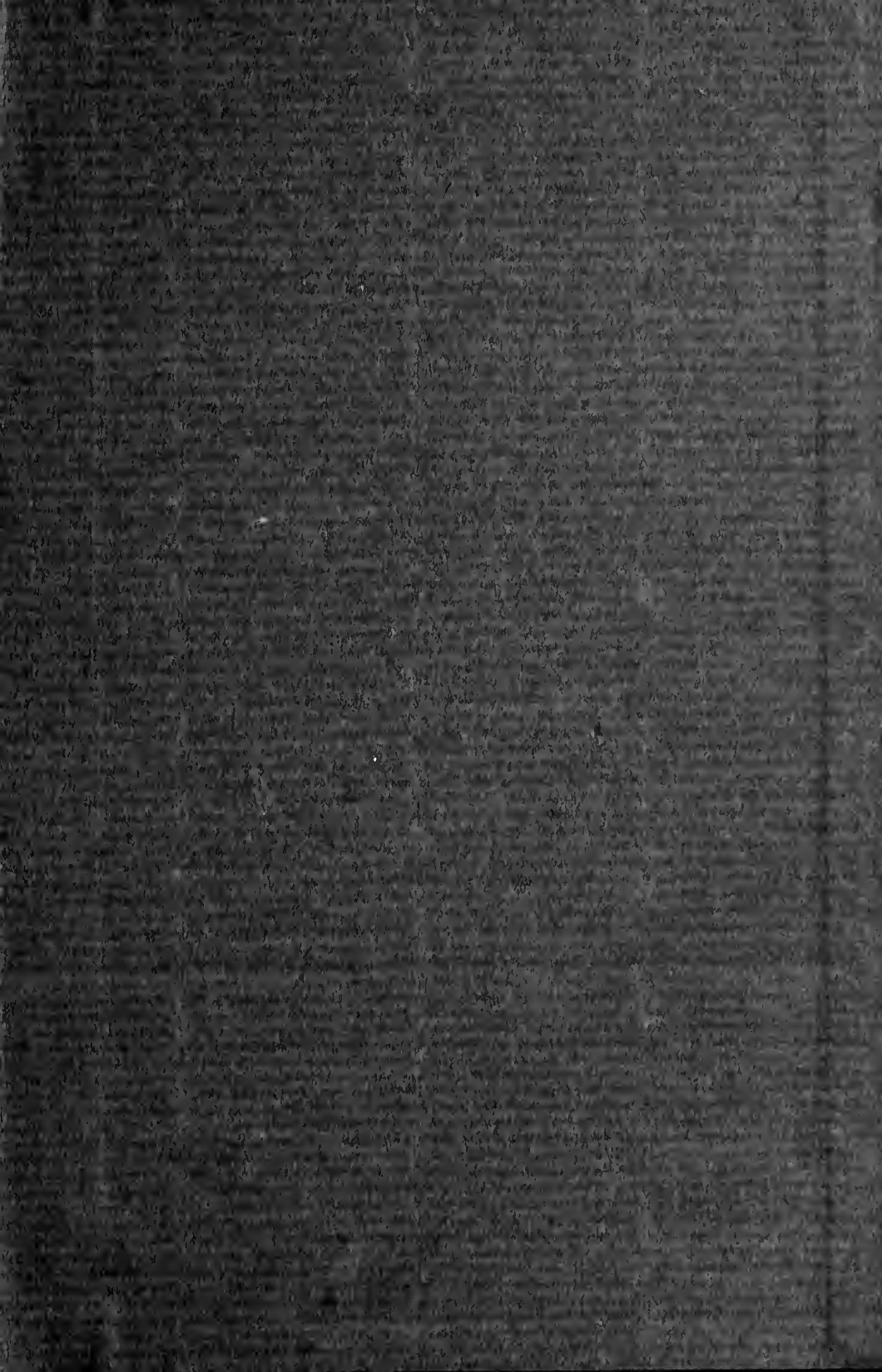
List of Illustrations

	TO FACE PAGE
THE VAILL HOMESTEAD WHICH BELONGS TO MY MEMORY, TITLE	✓
MANY YEARS AGO	5 ✓
THE OLD LITCHFIELD VILLAGE AS I REMEMBERED IT . .	9 ✓
THE BEECHER MEMORIAL	13 ✓
FOUR OF THE VAILL FAMILY	16 ✓
THE PERCH THAT WAS NOT BORN TO BLUSH UNSEEN . .	26 ✓
WAR ROCK	31 ✓
BANTAM LAKE	51 ✓
THE GOULD FAMILY	52 ✓
THEODORE F. VAILL	64 ✓
JULIA VAILL AND THREE MAIDS SHE LOVED	70 ✓
JULIA IN HER TEENS	74 ✓
MY FATHER	78 ✓
THE YOUNG POET	81
OLD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH	89 ✓









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